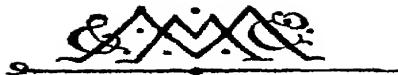


CIVITAS DEI  
VOLUME THREE



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# CIVITAS DEI

BY

LIONEL CURTIS

VOLUME THREE

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# CHAPTER I

## THE KEY TO CONFUSED SITUATIONS

IN 1935 the Dean of St. Paul's met a friend whose work kept him in touch with students throughout the world, and asked him what was their outlook on life at that time. His friend replied that young men were distraught by fear of two things—of finding no work through which they could earn a living, and of wars in which national governments would send them to fight and destroy one another. A whole generation which has learned how to use the forces of nature to meet its needs is oppressed by a fear that it will not be free to employ those forces for increasing its welfare, but may have to use them for mutual destruction.

In reviewing this situation there is, I suggest, at any rate one conclusion which issues with practical certainty. The dangers and difficulties under which the world as a whole is labouring, and which overshadow the mind of the young who have still the greater part of their lives to live, spring from one central cause. In the course of a few generations human beings have learned to control physical forces without acquiring a like measure of control over themselves and their relations one to another. Every serious effort to understand the present sense of ill-being which pervades human society leads the inquirer to this conclusion. One might shrink from repeating this truism were it not that its vital importance is so commonly disregarded in practice. Sir Josiah Stamp, whose main business in life is directing a vast system of mechanisation, went so far as to say that it would not matter if no important

discovery in the region of physical science was made for the next twenty years. Yet those who have to organise study know how much more easy it is to raise funds to equip physical laboratories than it is to raise funds to promote social research. An officer employed to dispense funds for research in America told me that his greatest difficulty lay in the fact that the best minds were attracted to physical science.

For all this there are two closely connected reasons. Physical facts can be measured and stated with far greater precision than facts in the sphere of human relations. Conclusions reached are more easy to prove, and also yield practical results which are definite and often dramatic. Physicists live to see the results of their work issue in men flying, or in hearing and seeing each other from opposite sides of the world. The effect of all these discoveries on human relations is immense; but they cannot be measured and stated with anything like the precision attained in presenting physical data. Conclusions to which they point cannot be proved with the same exactitude; nor do they issue in rapid spectacular shape like the physical inventions which impress even children and savages. And yet the conclusions which issue from the study of human relations are in the end potent as those which come from the study of physical data. The ideas of Moses, Jeremiah, Plato, Aristotle, Paul, Augustine, Adam Smith, Kant, Marx or Whitehead do, in the long run, affect the course of human affairs as deeply as those of Copernicus, Harley, Newton, Faraday or Einstein.

The study of physical nature belongs to the realm of knowledge. The study of human relations must go beyond the frontiers of knowledge and enter the realm of wisdom. It discredits itself when it tries to reach its conclusions merely by a patient collection and analysis of facts. The collection of facts about human relations is essential, and often demands

more labour and a greater expenditure of money than collection of physical data. But a study of human phenomena which relies on methods which yield such spectacular results when applied to physical data ends in a parody of the thing which it apes.

Physical science is from its nature departmental, even when it tries to consider what the physical universe is as a whole. Human science to fulfil its object must be catholic in the literal sense of that word. It must study human relations in all their departments; but it misses its final purpose when it fails in the effort to think of life as a whole. It should never cease to consider what is the end to be sought in all these diverse activities, or to have in its mind some answer to that question. For human activity proceeds by devising means to an end; but the means, as we handle them, tend to obscure the end and to be mistaken for ends in themselves. This defect of the human mind will be found to vitiate every department of life. What we call professionalism is the chronic disease of all the professions. The bedside manner developed by doctors, the unction of parsons or the over-refinement of lawyers are cases in point. Another is the failing of public servants which Dickens described as red-tape, which means that officials have come to think more of the methods of office than of the service which their office should render the public. Admiral Mahan has been quoted as saying that a military leader whose strategy is sound can afford to commit tactical blunders; but no tactical skill will save a military leader whose strategy is wrong. Commanders of regiments and warships, and even of armies and fleets, become so absorbed in the technical task of manœuvring their units that they lose sight of the ultimate aim of the war. They are mere tacticians. The strategist is the leader who never forgets the ultimate aim of the war.

Mahan's observation is as true when applied to all the activities of peace, and most of all in the field of politics. How many of those who direct the fortunes of states have envisaged and kept in mind the end which they ought to attain for the people whose life they direct?

The Covenant was a plan for preventing war. The project of equipping the League with police of its own, Locarno, the Kellogg Pact and a number of similar plans proposed and some of them realised, had the same object in view. Yet the sense of general security has declined. Throughout the world men everywhere feel that they live in a structure which some crime like the murder at Sarajevo, some despot drunk with excess of his own power or distraught by terror of losing it, or even some mere accident, may bring crashing about their heads. They are so possessed with a sense of impending disaster that they cannot apply their minds to the tasks of providing clothing and bread for themselves and their children.

In my own experience in South Africa, India and Ireland, I have met with problems which seemed to move in a vicious circle. Ingenious and elaborate plans for solving them had been found to lead nowhere. Reasons for doing this or that were so evenly balanced as to paralyse decision; or those who were forced to act acted at random. The one sure way to escape from such vicious circles is, I suggest, to leave aside the discussion of practical plans in all their intricacy until you have reached some clear view of the ultimate object you ought to attain. When you feel that your mind has grasped the end you are seeking, then look at the plans proposed in the light of that view. Test them by asking how far they are genuine means to the end as you see it. The sense of frustration produced by their detail will vanish. The ultimate object, when clearly viewed, will itself sug-

gest plans of a similar nature, though usually plans which require more courage.

This method of approaching practical problems was in fact brought to my mind, or rendered explicit, by an incident which I here propose to relate.

In 1908 Lord Morley, a man of advanced democratic ideas, had remarked when explaining his scheme for Indian Reforms in the House of Lords: "If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it".<sup>1</sup> The ideas expressed in these words still held the field when I visited India some years later, and was taken by Sir Valentine Chirol to the camp of a senior officer engaged on a tour of inspection. For several weeks we were able to see how our host administered a great division of one of the provinces, with the sense of pleasure one feels in watching a craftsman who is master of his tools. What impressed us most was the ease and rapidity with which he decided the questions laid before him by subordinate officers.

One early morning our host led us to the top of a great dam which had just been built where a river emerged from the hills. Turning his back on the valley which was slowly filling with water, the commissioner pointed to the jungle which covered the plains below us and were now to be cleared and brought under crops. "Here", he said, "is a difficult decision I have to make. There are two ways in which we can clear and settle this country. If we parcel it out to zemindars (landlords) they will get it cleared and settled by tenants in a very short time. If we try to settle the ryots (cultivators) ourselves it will take much longer. I have to confess that I find myself quite unable to decide which of these two plans to follow, and I want your opinion." To this I replied that I had no opinion to offer. Even if

I had one, the views of a man who had been in India a few weeks could have no value for one who had spent his life there. "None the less", said our obstinate host, "I mean to have your opinion. I want to see how the question strikes a mind that comes perfectly fresh to it." He was greatly in earnest, and I felt it discourteous to refuse. So I said: "If you will give me some more information I will try to form an opinion, but I still believe that it can have no value. Let me think what questions I ought to ask you." "That is fair", said our host. "If you ask me questions, I will try to answer them."

Greatly puzzled, I thought for some time and at length said: "The question which occurs to me is so general that I almost shrink from putting it. For several weeks we have watched you at work and have seen what the British administration is doing in India. It is giving the people a justice more effective and purer than any they have known in the past. It is combating plague and famine. It is teaching them new methods of agriculture and protecting the ryot from usury. In villages and towns it is introducing sanitary methods. In the schools it is giving them genuine knowledge. Throughout the country it is keeping the peace. Now the question I have to ask is this: Are these and the other benefits which our rule confers the ultimate end which it has in view? Or is it looking to something beyond these things, to enabling the people to provide these benefits for themselves?" After pausing for some time the commissioner replied: "Your question is a fair one; but I have to confess that I am not prepared with an answer. I will give you an answer, but we must postpone further discussion until I am able to give it."

The subject was not referred to again till late that evening when we sat round the camp-fire. The commissioner then returned to it. "I have been thinking

all day of the question you put me this morning, and now I find myself able to answer it. I think that we ought to be looking beyond the immediate things that you see we are doing. We must make it our aim to enable the people of India to manage these things for themselves and, in the end, to do without us. After thinking over the matter all day I can see no other answer to be given than this. Now, what is your next question?" "My next question", I said, "is whether in the light of your long experience the zemindari or ryotwari system of land-tenure is most likely to fit the people who live under it to manage their own affairs?" With no hesitation our host replied: "The ryotwari system, of course".

This practical question as to how an area of land should be settled with human beings had baffled this experienced officer for months, possibly for years. The real question he had overlooked, and left unsettled in his mind, was not a question of detail but of ultimate values. When persuaded to turn from the question of policy and answer first the question of values which lay behind it, he was able at once to decide his policy in the light of his own answer. Many years after, when the Round Table Conference was meeting in England, the answer he gave to my second question was strongly confirmed. I happened to meet Mr. Iyengar, editor of the *Hindu*, and asked him if I was right in thinking that the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had succeeded better in Madras than elsewhere. If so, what did he think was the reason. "Yes", he replied, "they succeeded better in Madras because of the ryotwari system established there by Sir Thomas Munro".

I have thus been led to believe that a path through the thickets of life can always be found by first deciding what is the ultimate goal we are trying to reach. When our purposes cross each other, let us look to the nature of our purpose to see what it is,

before we devise plans to avoid thwarting each other. If in the process we find one purpose beyond all others worthy of attainment, we shall then find the question how to avoid thwarting each other easier to answer.

The most obvious truths are often the most neglected. Emerson remarked that while curious and exceptional things interest the talented mind, genius fastens on those which are common. On the very day that I read this remark of Emerson, Simpson, the state entomologist, a gifted American, called to advise me how to cope with white-ants which were ruining my trees. We spent a thrilling hour together, at the close of which Simpson remarked, "The trouble of my profession is that entomologists spend so much of their time on the rarer insects. The really important insects are the commoner species like termites and house-flies." A few days later he died of enteric, an immeasurable loss to science and South Africa; but his parting remark riveted Emerson's saying in my mind. The most obvious methods are those we neglect. We cannot expect much from the medicines prescribed by a doctor who has not paused to diagnose the malady he is treating. We must learn to state problems before we discuss their solutions. Having stated the problem we must also consider what is the end at which we are aiming in trying to solve it.

Of the first volume of *Civitas Dei* a friendly reviewer remarked that the task essayed was "really no less than that of defining the *summum bonum*, the end and purpose of human existence, and of stating the process by which it may be achieved". Other reviewers described the book as 'ambitious', a word which suggests that so great a theme should only be handled by minds of the highest order. To this my answer must be that the question is one which stands to be answered by every rational man for himself.

Failure to consider and answer it explains why so much discussion of world affairs leads to so little result. Counsel is darkened by argument leading nowhere, for the simple reason that the disputants have never really considered where they are trying to go. What is the practical use of discussing the state of the world as a whole unless there is some agreement as to what the purpose of life on this earth should be? To answer that question we must dare to consider what life is, and what are the ultimate realities. We can reach and express our conclusions, each for ourselves, without presuming to say that we know the end and object of life, that we know what life and reality are. Before we begin to talk of knowing we do well to consider what knowledge is and what are its limitations. I dare to assert that plans for reforming society have little value when framed by people who have not sought to answer these questions and are not prepared to state what answers they find.

We are told by the churches that divine revelation has answered these questions, or has answered them enough for practical purposes. The human mind, it is held, cannot answer such questions for itself. A sufficient knowledge for practical guidance has, therefore, been given through supernatural channels. The truth was conveyed in visions or otherwise to the minds of prophets and was placed on record in their writings for the guidance of men. The divine authority of these men was often attested by their visible power to work miracles. The belief of St. Paul in the teaching of Jesus was finally based on belief that the person of Jesus had risen from the grave, and had made himself known after physical death on the cross to himself and to many disciples. It was clear to St. Paul that, were he convinced that Jesus in person had not made himself known to his followers after death by supernatural means, the faith that he preached would be worthless.

In the first volume I argued that miracles did not in fact happen, and most of the orthodox criticism has fastened on that point. But as yet no critic has grappled with the major point that I raised, which was this. Even if miracles did happen in fact could they afford evidence to prove the teaching of those who worked them? Can the ultimate problems of life be resolved by anything which happens in the world of phenomena? This question can be answered by taking an instance—the moral sense. In men is an instinct which tells them that the difference in acting this way or that is of infinite importance. So strong is this instinct with many that they choose to obey it, even when doing so means torture and death to themselves. Men have even done so when they believed that death was the end of existence itself. Now is or is not this instinct valid? Is it based on the truth, or is it an illusion? That is, I submit, the supreme enigma, the ultimate question, which each must in some way or other answer for himself. But can we find the answer in anything which could happen in the world of events? Can anyone picture and describe an event supernatural or natural which would settle that question once for all and place it for ever beyond dispute? If God himself should appear every day to all men and affirm the infinite difference of right from wrong, we should soon be disputing whether it was really God who appeared, and whether God existed at all. We should find men who doubted, and rightly doubted, the evidence of their senses, who found in their minds something which questioned that evidence as final. And the same thing would happen if one rose from the dead to warn us that the consequence of acts to ourselves was not ended with life on this earth.

And he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come

into this place of torment. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead.<sup>2</sup>

As the being called man attained to humanity he came to realise that life is a riddle. He is faced by the question how to live it, and still in his childhood craves to be given some final answer which he cannot mistake and none can dispute. He shrinks from the truth that the writers who told the stories of Elijah and Job had begun to divine.

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.<sup>3</sup>

So also with Job when he pleads and demands that an answer to the riddle of life shall be given him in some unmistakable form. But "God vouchsafes to Job no revelation . . . whatever help is to be obtained is to be had, not through an oracle, but by the exercise of Job's own thought".<sup>4</sup> The unpalatable truth, bitter in the mouth, but sweet in the belly, was dawning on the minds of those who had told these stories. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus it becomes explicit. The truth by which we are to live is to be sought by each for himself. We can find great help in the teaching of those that are wiser than ourselves; but we alone can decide who are the wise and what in their teaching is false or true. The return of one of them from the dead could help in no way to decide whether the thing that

he told us was true. Our own conscience and mind, inseparable faculties, are the final oracle. With them we must read the world about us and make up our minds what it is, in order to know how we should live in it.

This belief that an answer to the riddle of life, which we cannot find for ourselves, is revealed in some supernatural way is one natural to man in his childhood. The growth of humanity from childhood to manhood, from superstition to genuine faith, is the theme of recorded history, the inner meaning of civilisation.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords debate, December 17, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 27-31.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xix. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> *Civitas Dei*, Vol. I. p. 39.

## CHAPTER II

### A CONFESSION OF FAITH

IN the previous pages I have argued that action in public affairs cannot be discussed to advantage unless we have in our minds some clear conception of the object with which we propose to act. We are thus driven to state the answer we give to the riddle of life. I have further argued that the answer to this riddle cannot, from the nature of the case, be revealed by supernatural means—that it must be furnished by each for himself from his own conscience and mind. I cannot, therefore, evade the ordeal of stating my own answer for what it is worth.

To begin with I am conscious of a world in which I exist with others like me; that what I do affects them, and what they do affects me. I am also aware of a feeling common to us all that what we do, or else leave undone, is a matter of infinite importance. I am constantly feeling that, whilst I should like to do one thing to please myself, some inner voice is urging me to do something else for the sake of others. I also know that all normal men, to a lesser or greater degree, experience this conflict of motive. I myself and others are constantly failing to obey this voice; but none the less, having failed, we feel that we have failed in something of infinite importance. On the other hand, I know of innumerable cases in which men have sacrificed life itself and with it the very power of enjoyment, in order to achieve what they thought was their duty. They were acting as though some goal, other than their own pleasure, were the end and object of life. Were they under a mere illusion? Were they right in

accepting good and evil as valid distinctions, as something other than pleasure and pain?

In making this choice between two opposite views we can, I submit, derive some guidance from reason applied to experience. This at least is plain, for all practical purposes, that if everyone acted on the theory that right is no better than wrong all human affairs would fall into chaos. If pleasure, not duty, is the end and object of life, then pleasure itself is unattainable. If everyone, on the other hand, acted on the theory that right and wrong are valid distinctions, and that all conduct must be governed by a sense of duty, a state of society would be reached in which happiness would be raised to the highest possible level. If men were to act as though pleasure alone were the sole motive of conduct, society would cease to exist. Human beings would revert to the level of brutes, with this difference, that reason would give the strong a greater power than that of the brutes of inflicting misery on the weak. It would also expose the weak to suffering more poignant than beasts endure. Human beings would end by destroying each other and cease to exist. If all men could act at all times as though their sense of duty were paramount, society would cease to depend on restrictions. Freedom would develop to an ever-increasing degree. And with freedom men would acquire an ever-increasing control of nature, of physical forces and conditions. The physical pains to which we are heirs would be steadily diminished. The capacity in men of discerning the path of duty, and also the will to follow it, would be always improving.

In facing this inexorable choice which everyone must make, whether consciously or otherwise, we can each of us find in our own reason and experience substantial ground for deciding to base our lives on the faith that right and wrong are valid distinctions of infinite importance. It is, I submit, reasonable to

assume that the difference of right and wrong is a real one, and to act, or try to act, in that faith. And assuming that the infinite difference of good and evil is based on reality, what then do I mean by reality itself? What kind of thing must a universe be, in which good and evil are valid distinctions of infinite importance? Are the things which I touch and see the realities, or is there behind them something more real, of which tangible things are the outward expression?

There is in fact something of which I am more keenly aware than I am of the things which I touch and see. I am conscious of the earth and of what there is in it, of the air which surrounds it, and of heavenly bodies in the space beyond. I am conscious, too, of my own body and limbs. But I know that this body does not comprise what I call myself. When I die it will cease to be "I" and will presently dissolve and return to the earth, water and air from which it was made. My own personality, of which I am vividly conscious, is something else and more than this body in which for the moment it finds its expression. If I do not know *what* I am, at least I know *that* I am. I believe also that millions of others exist like myself. I can see their bodies and hear their voices, and so learn what is in their minds. From these sights and sounds I infer that in these bodies are personalities like my own. These invisible personalities seem the most important things in the universe. I consider the things which I touch and see merely as affecting these personalities. If I care about meat and drink, housing and clothes, it is only because I find that such things are needed to keep in repair the body in which my own personality and those of others for the present exist. That impalpable essence, my own personality, is something of which I am more conscious than I am of the things which I touch and see, including my own body and limbs. In plain words we

know of things which are not material, which we call spiritual. From matter we distinguish our minds or souls.

But which of the two is the ultimate reality in the universe? Are our minds merely a way in which matter behaves under certain conditions, or is mind the basic reality and matter a mere expression of mind? We are now certain that in so many million years matter, as we know it on this earth, will no longer serve as the vehicle of life. The history of man on this planet must end and cease to exist. If matter is the ultimate reality, matter will continue. But all our lives and what we did in them, and the consequence of our acts as affecting others, will have no kind of ultimate result. Its unimportance will, in fact, be infinite. If matter is the ultimate reality, our sense of the infinite difference of right from wrong is a sheer illusion.

This brings me back to my previous point. If human life were based on belief that the pleasure of each is his only good and his sense of duty a figment, then life would rapidly cease to be human. The law of the jungle, the negation of law—anarchy, would result. As I do not see how anyone can prove that matter is the ultimate reality—that our sense of right and wrong is illusion—I cannot myself understand how anyone in reason can base his life or call on others to base their lives on that belief. If the mere possibility of mistake is admitted, the results of action based on mistake of this order are beyond measure disastrous. On the other hand, if we assume that our sense of right and wrong is valid and based on the truth, then, if we have made a mistake, that mistake is of no final importance. If matter is the final reality, then nothing is of final importance. When life has ceased to exist and only matter remains, then human experience will be ended and vanish. What happened to men, what they did to

each other, or how they lived, could have no after-effects, should life again recur in the universe.

In assuming that right and wrong are valid distinctions, as in fact most people assume, I am thus led to a further assumption. A universe in which this is so cannot cease to exist when our bodies have ceased to exist, when the wandering planet on which they have lived has returned to its parent sun and reverted to gas and flame. The final reality must belong to the same order of things as my own personality, and not to the same order of things as my body and limbs, as the visible and tangible world about me. The things which I touch and hear and see must themselves be expressions of something akin to that essence, my own personality. In my judgment of human beings I feel that the greatest are those in whom personality is carried to the highest. I am, therefore, led to suppose that the final reality behind the universe is personality carried to its highest degree, expanded to an infinite power. I cannot deny to this personality any qualities of goodness or greatness in the persons I know or of whom I have knowledge. I can only suppose that He has those qualities to an infinite degree. If so, some clue to His nature will be found in trying to see what is best in men as we know them; and in trying to grasp what that best is.

I must here pause to remark that while I assume that good and evil are valid distinctions, I cannot undertake to describe in general terms wherein that difference consists. When called on to act I must make up my mind for myself what is the right action as distinguished from the wrong. I can try to recognise goodness when I see it, and also evil. But I cannot hope to explain what they are, or, indeed, to say why evil should exist in the universe at all. Whenever we try to see what this universe is, we come in the end to insoluble riddles, because

our human intelligence is limited. We have glimpses of reason, but have not powers of reason to the full. I will give as an instance a simple and often quoted example, our idea of unity, expressed in the figure 'one'. Yet having conceived the idea of unity and expressed it as 'one', as the atom of number, the indivisible unit, we find that our minds are dividing this atom into halves, quarters, and an infinite number of fractions. From our notion of unity we cannot exclude the idea of endless divisions. And so in the moral world our acceptance of good and evil as valid distinctions presents an insoluble riddle. But these limits to human thought do not excuse us from the task of forming some view, of making some guess, as to what the universe is, and what is our place in it. We have all to act, and our action affects others as well as ourselves. With what end in view are we to act? If we cannot know with absolute certainty we can still guess and act on the guess. Our life in the main is based on guesswork, from hour to hour and day to day. I know for certain that two added to two makes four, that two sides of a triangle will always be greater than the third. But outside this world of abstractions I know little for certain. I cannot know with absolute certainty that the sun will set to-night or rise to-morrow. A wandering comet might enter the solar system and destroy it. Yet all my experience leads me to guess that night and day will follow each other, and I base my actions on that belief. Except in the sphere of mathematics we act on a faith that is less than knowledge. Man in his childhood is ever craving an absolute knowledge which, could he attain it, would annihilate faith and destroy free-will.

Though I cannot attempt to explain the mystery of evil, or the freedom of men to do evil or good, I treat them as facts. And from these assumptions I go on to infer that reality is something akin to my

own personality, to all personalities that I know of, which contains what is best in them all and more without measure. When we meet personality carried to the highest degree we tend to describe it as 'genius'. By this word we imply some instinct and capacity to create, to bring into being something that did not exist before. It is so in music, in literature, art, and in all the fields of human activity. Our deepest instincts, our faculties at the highest, are constructive. "The end of man", as Carlyle said, "is an act not a thought". The problem of life, which we cannot evade, is to know how to act. Then, if personality, as we know it at its highest, is creative, we have reason to assume, as the writer of Genesis assumed, that ultimate reality, God, is supremely engaged in the work of creation.

There is something surely in the instinct of men to call themselves creatures. What else can this word imply than creations of some personality higher than themselves? If we think of God as goodness personified, as personality on the infinite scale, we are led to suppose that supreme reality would call into being further realities akin to himself. Such creatures would not be akin to himself unless they also were endowed with the faculty of creation. Their end and object must also be to construct, to bring into being on their own initiative what was not in being before. They could not resemble God or partake of his nature unless they could act on their own initiative. They must be free to create, to abstain from creation, to hinder its process. "And there shall be beautiful things made new for the surprise of the sky-children."<sup>1</sup> Truly. But best of all are the beautiful things that the sky-children make for themselves, and their highest delight is achieved in the making. Though I cannot say what goodness is, I feel that it must be something creative. Though I cannot say what evil is, or why it should

exist, I feel that it is something which spoils or impedes creation.

Construction by intelligent beings implies a purpose and plan. I cannot conceive a creative God not inspired by a purpose, with no plan in his mind. If he calls into being creatures to join in his work of creation, I think that he means that these creatures should grasp enough of his purpose to join in his work. Could they see the whole of it from first to last, it is hard to see what power of initiative would remain to them. To me it seems he assigns us the task of divining the meaning of things with faculties which cannot indeed grasp the whole of an infinite purpose, but are yet sufficient to join in the work. I think we can now begin to discern a purpose running through the history of man, which can help us to see how to fit in our work with that purpose.

In the book of Genesis God is conceived as creating the world as the home of his creatures. These creatures he fashions, much as a potter might fashion an image from clay; but then, with a power denied to the potter, he breathes on the clay and inspires it with a life derived from his own. In the last century science has supplied a more rational and interesting view of the process. We can now see better what the universe is, and more of the stages by which it came to its present condition. We know this earth as a speck of dust in the universe on which, as nowhere else perhaps, physical conditions permitted the existence of life. As to what life is, or how it came to appear, when physical conditions permitted its existence, we know no more than the author of Genesis knew. But science has led us to believe that living things were not each fashioned by the hand of the great artificer. Beginning from forms hard to distinguish from crude matter, they developed in process of time one from another. The latest and highest development was man. In the course of aeons

the animal slowly developed a brain, which was capable of seeing and thinking of himself as distinct from others. As the creature became conscious of himself as a person, as something distinct from the world and from other persons about him, he reached the stage of humanity. He began to realise that the things which he did affected others as well as himself. He slowly became aware of an instinct which moved him to act in the interest of others rather than of himself. He became conscious of good and evil, of right and wrong. As his power of doing as well as of seeing what was right developed, so human society began to exist. He began to imagine ways of making the world about him better. He was more able to achieve what he thought of, even though it meant a sacrifice of himself. He had not merely to choose like a judge between opposite courses. His imagination, the essential creative faculty, began to conceive new and difficult ideas for bettering those about him. He was sometimes able to bring these ideas to fruition at a cost to himself.

I cannot attempt to show how these faculties of seeing himself as distinct from others, of divining the interest of others as higher than his own, and of seeing how to promote it, were implanted in his mind. I can only describe the process by saying that, as men rose from the level of animals to be men, God was revealing his own nature to man—a supreme exercise of creative power, because he thereby called into being creatures capable of creating things which were new in the spiritual world. All human knowledge and all right action proceed, I believe, from divine revelation, which enabled men to reveal and create for themselves.

We do not believe now, like the author of Genesis, that God created the universe and the beings who live in it in six different stages by separate acts. We believe that the earth and the heavenly bodies have

been brought to the stage they have now reached by the operation of physical laws through periods of time too great to measure. We believe that some hundreds of millions of years ago this earth had reached physical conditions which permitted the existence of that invisible, intangible factor which we call life. We do not know, or think that we know, what life is, or how it began on the earth. We accept its existence and beginning as facts. We believe that, having begun, life grew to an ever-increasing diversity by laws more complex and harder to grasp than mechanical laws, but just as fixed in their operation, and therefore rightly described as laws. In the process of time creatures developed, endowed with perception—fishes, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. They are creatures endowed with knowledge in its most rudimentary form. But their actions are still governed by their own instincts and desires. They have no essential power of choice. But the process of growth continued till one branch of the mammals had developed reason. By reason we mean a capacity which enables a man to divine certain aspects of reality which a beast cannot grasp. A man can grasp mathematical truths, more or less of them, according to the power of his reason. All normal men can see and agree that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third. Such an aspect of truth could not be explained to an animal. It is fair to say that animal differs from human intelligence as the noises made by a monkey differ from human speech. The degree in which creatures are able to express their ideas to each other is the rough measure of those ideas.

Reason also enables a man to see and think of himself as something distinct from the world about him and from others who inhabit that world. The dawn of reason means that the conscious animal has become self-conscious. The man is aware that his conduct affects the lives of others, as their conduct

affects his own. He finds that he cannot at all times do what he likes without inflicting some injury on others. He is conscious of an instinct which suggests that he ought to think of their needs and desires rather than his own. He begins to distinguish good and evil as something different from the pleasures and pain which govern the actions of animal life. Together with reason he develops a 'conscience', a sense of freedom to choose what is good for others rather than do what would please himself.

I cannot recall any definite moment in my own childhood when I suddenly realised a sense of duty as something which I ought to obey. Nor do I think that there was one definite moment in the childhood of man when the moral sense which made him something more than an animal entered his being. One can only say that as the growth of intelligence reaches a certain stage the creature becomes aware of some other standard of conduct than his own desire to achieve pleasure or escape pain. He begins to discern a distinction of good from evil, of right from wrong. He becomes conscious of freedom to choose what is better or worse by some other standard than that which distinguishes pleasure from pain. If the ultimate reality behind the universe is spirit, not matter—is something of the nature of our own personalities raised to the infinite scale, a being engaged on the work of creation—God, I can only regard this knowledge of good and evil, this sense of freedom to choose between them, as a revelation of God to his creature, nay more as an incarnation of God. I can best describe what has happened by saying that God has made men in his own likeness. Men join in the work of creation so far as they see and also choose, so far as they conceive and also achieve, what is good in itself. One who had mastered his own desires and did what was right regardless of mental and physical anguish, would thus be

divine. From the records we have I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was such a man, wholly divine and not less divine because he was human. When such a man had lived and died and his life and death were on record, creation had passed to a higher plane. "Be ye perfect as your Father also is perfect" is in form a command, but in substance a promise. With that promise in mind, I am not prepared to assert that no human being will ever again master, as Jesus mastered, the mysterious principle of evil in our nature. I am not prepared to say that no other creature who lives on this earth will ever attain to the plane that he reached. The human race is still in its infancy, but a new chapter in its history was opened when one had shown in his life and death what man might hope to become in his prime. My faith is that as men obey the commands of Christ to create a system of society ordered in accordance with the laws of God, that system will bring into being men in his likeness. Others will grow to the stature of Christ, till a time will come when such are the rule and not the exception. The second coming of Christ may be true in a sense fuller than early Christians conceived.

In the view I take, this sense of a difference of right from wrong, of freedom to choose the better or worse, is of the nature of divine revelation. It was one implanted, little by little, by God in his creatures, with increasing strength in each generation. It was this sense which turned his creatures from beasts into men "made in the likeness of God". To the mind of each normal child this revelation is given, and with it a power of reason which, patiently used, suffices to tell us enough of the world we live in to find the path that our steps should tread.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Keats, *Hyperion*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DOCTRINE OF AUTHORITY EXAMINED

IN his infancy man conceived the forces of Nature as personalities and called them gods. He thought of the world as largely controlled by beings inspired by the faculties and passions of men, but with power much greater than men can possess. Superstition and paganism are the product of those long aeons during which one man could convey his ideas to another only by the transitory medium of speech. So long as speech was the only vehicle of thought the notions which entered the minds of men could not be brought to the test of effective criticism. We may safely assume that before the invention of writing men had been born with minds powerful as those of Moses, Isaiah, Gautama, Confucius or Mahomet. Their words no doubt raised the ideas of those who heard them to a higher plane. But their teaching, transmitted from one generation to another, would be changed and distorted in the process as stories are changed and distorted in course of transmission from mouth to mouth. Some improvement was doubtless achieved when men learned to express their thoughts in poems which others could memorise. Yet reason could not begin to produce a rational philosophy or religion till men could leave their thoughts on record. When the words spoken by Moses, or the words which men thought he had spoken, could be put into writing, a new epoch had opened. Readers could then see his ideas for themselves and also discuss them with others. They could thus be brought to the test of reason and conscience in each new generation. Conscience and

reason could begin to suggest what was false and must be discarded, and what must be added to make the residue truer.

The Mosaic writings depicted Yahwe, the god of the Hebrews, as different in certain important respects from the gods worshipped by neighbouring tribes, such as Baal or Nebo. Moses conceived the new and creative idea that Yahwe was deeply concerned with the way in which one Hebrew dealt with another. He could not be satisfied like Baal or Nebo merely by rites or by offerings of food. To secure his favour Hebrews must learn to deal rightly one with another. The Hebrews were thus led by Moses to think of their own conscience as the law ordained by their god Yahwe. They thought of Yahwe as the spirit of rightness, as justice personified. The Hebrew began to conceive him as something of the order of his own personality, an invisible and intangible essence, as something belonging to the order of spirit rather than to the order of matter. He developed a feeling that Yahwe was a being who could not be known through the senses. No attempt must be made to depict him in visible or tangible form. To reduce Yahwe to the form of a graven image or to worship him in any visible shape was wrong in itself.

The Hebrew had thus achieved the idea that a man should behave towards his god as one good man would behave to another. One human being might serve another by offering him food when he was hungry. But no good man would think of trying to please another by killing his own child and by placing its roasted flesh before him. The fact that he offered his friend the dearest of all his possessions could not make that offering pleasing to a righteous friend. To offer a god the life and flesh of one's own child was to place that god on a lower level than human beings. To men who had once thought of God as the source from which their own moral sense

was derived the idea of human sacrifice was impossible.

It is clear from the Pentateuch that some Hebrew or Hebrews had seen that if the difference we feel between good and evil is based on realities, then those realities must belong to the order of spirit rather than matter. Our own personalities are something more real than our tangible bodies. The final reality behind the universe must be something akin to our personalities.

These golden ideas were mixed with and largely obscured by heaps of traditional dross. But a time had arrived when the art of writing could preserve results of genuine thought. New thinkers with exceptional powers of mind were able to start from the point at which the older thinkers had stopped and continue their work of extracting truth from the ore of tradition. In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy we see what priestly scribes centuries later believed that Moses had taught. Their profession in life was conducting the ritual of sacrifice prescribed by tradition. In all sincerity they believed that Moses, divinely inspired, had prescribed this ritual in detail. In time thinkers arose outside the priestly profession who dared to assert that a spiritual god could not really delight in the burning flesh of calves and fatlings. There were others, like Jeremiah, who began to perceive that a god, such as Moses conceived Yahwe to be, must be something more than the best and most powerful of gods. Such a being must be the only God, and others like Baal and Nebo no gods at all.

This line of thought led on to conclusions which the national pride of the Hebrew was slow to accept. If Yahwe were the only God in the universe, was it possible to hold that the Hebrew people were his only concern? In so far as other peoples conformed to his law, was he not also their God? Must not his king-

dom also be open to all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues? The majestic conception which the name Jehovah conveys to our minds had developed by successive efforts of thought from the narrower idea of a tribal deity conveyed by the name of Yahwe.

It was later still that the further conclusion began to develop which first appears in the book of Job, and reached its fullest development in the saying of Jesus that God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living".<sup>1</sup> The ultimate reality cannot be real in any valid sense of that term unless it exists beyond the limits of time and space. A reality which comes to an end and ceases is no reality. If God is reality he must be eternal, and so must the principle of righteousness which he embodies. But if this principle is eternal what meaning can it have for creatures who exist only in time and space? Can the difference of right and wrong be of infinite importance to men, as they feel it to be, if their personalities cease to exist at the moment of physical death? If human beings are capable at all of sharing the righteousness which is God, their personalities must like his have an existence beyond the limits of time and space. If our personalities are real in any intelligible sense of that word, they cannot cease to exist when the bodies, through which we here express ourselves to each other, return to the dust out of which they were made. If our own personalities are not real there is no reality. There is no basis from which to infer an ultimate reality behind the material universe. There is no God. The conception of God as the ultimate reality beyond the limits of matter, as something eternal, involves the idea that our own personalities are also eternal. If our sense of the difference of right from wrong is valid and true, we cannot evade the conclusion that God is the God of the living and not of the dead.

Such, I think, was the faith which reached its fullest expression in the teaching of Jesus, a faith developed by powerful Hebrew thinkers by the aid of writing, because when thoughts could be written one thinker could begin where another left off. By this process emerged a conception of final reality as personality on the infinite scale which, with all its manifest difficulties, affords the best answer to the riddle of life. But these Hebrew thinkers, and those they taught, did not themselves regard this conception as a product of thought. To them the Mosaic idea of Yahwe appeared too majestic for human conscience and thought to conceive. It must, they assumed, have been told to Moses by Yahwe himself in so many words. This led to the story that Moses had learned what he taught in conversations with Yahwe himself in the clefts of Horeb.

The human race, still in its childhood, craves for certainty. The idea of direct revelation satisfied this craving. No one had seen, as yet, that if this craving were satisfied, if final answers to the riddle of life could in fact be vouchsafed, then the freedom of men to choose between right and wrong was illusory. The discovery that human knowledge of reality can never be more than a guess, a guess which each must make for himself, was reserved for the Greek thinkers. It never occurred to the Hebrew prophets that God could have left human beings to think out for themselves the faith which was needed to guide their actions. The great conceptions of God and his ways which entered their minds they regarded as oracles, of which they were only the vehicle or mouthpiece.

The invention of writing itself did much to promote this idea. The people who practised the art and knew how it worked were few. To the vast majority it seemed a mystery or indeed a species of magic. A story told in Australia may help the reader to

realise how writing impresses the primitive mind. In a district bordering on the central deserts a native runner was employed to carry the mailbags to the houses of lonely settlers. Some tobacco together with an invoice was sent in one of these bags, but when it was opened the tobacco was gone. The runner charged with the theft at once admitted it. He explained with some bitterness that he knew that "that little devil piece of paper (the invoice) would tell on him if it could". So he took the precaution of putting the invoice in the hollow of a tree, flattering himself that it could not then see what he did when he stole the tobacco. This is, of course, an extreme illustration. To the primitive mind the magic and mysterious art of writing practised by priests was invested with notions of sanctity.

The teaching of Moses was, I suppose, transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another for a number of centuries before it was reduced to writing by priests. Ideas and stories when transmitted by word of mouth grow like a snowball, and alter their shape. When, at last, the tradition was reduced to writing this process of growth and change was stopped. The great conceptions which Moses propounded had not been lost. They were, however, embedded in a mass of legend, folklore and ritual prescriptions, unconsciously added by men who repeated one to another what they thought and believed that Moses had taught. When all this tradition had been inscribed in five different books, the Hebrew world came to believe that Moses himself had written the Pentateuch. In the popular mind they came to be looked on as sacred writings. Ere long the belief developed that Moses had written what God himself had told him to write. They were all true and equally true. In these writings God had revealed answers to the riddle of life which the human mind could never have found for itself.

A belief that ultimate truths could only be known in this way became firmly embedded in the Hebrew mind.

In process of time there were born to the race others like Moses, with a keener moral sense than their fellows and exceptional powers of mind. They reached conclusions which lay beyond those which Moses had reached. They proclaimed that the God of Israel as revealed in the Pentateuch could not really be satisfied by exact and punctual performance of the ritual prescribed in its pages. He could only be satisfied by the just and righteous dealing of one man with another, of the right treatment of the weak by the strong. They also began to see and to say that such a God as Moses described could not be merely the God of the Hebrews. He must be the only God, the God of the whole universe, the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. Their teaching was recognised by the conscience of many who heard it as true. But these prophets themselves were by no means immune from the powerful influence of tradition. So clear were these great ideas to their minds that they thought and said that God himself had told them these truths. They themselves were merely the mouthpiece of oracles. When their teaching was placed on record by themselves or others, it claimed to rank as an oracle or message from God. In course of time the books of the prophets were subject to the same psychological influence as the books of the law, the books which claimed to record the teaching of Moses. The books of the prophets were presently ranked as the word of God.

In this way grew the idea that men cannot find for themselves the truths without which they cannot govern their conduct through life. They can only know these truths in so far as God himself chooses to reveal them through the minds and mouths of selected teachers.

Let us try to see what this theory involves. We now believe that man came into being by the long, slow and gradual process whereby the brain in the animal kingdom became capable of reason. Little by little the creature grew to be conscious of himself as distinct from others. He found that his conduct affected their welfare, and there dawned in his mind an instinct which told him that he ought to aim at their welfare rather than his own. His reason began to suggest that, if he did this, it would be right, and, if he did that, it would be wrong. In all probability the creature had experienced this sense and had, therefore, been human for at least a million years before he acquired the art of recording his thoughts in writing. The theory of direct revelation unconsciously assumes that God waited to reveal himself and his ways to men till men had at last invented the difficult arts of writing and reading. Had Moses existed in palaeolithic times the message he received from God would have vanished in the mists of tradition through the thousands of years which passed ere the age of writing began. The truths that he seems to have uttered barely survived the few generations which passed before men were able to put into writing the growing mass of tradition in which they were still preserved. The theory that God reveals to men through chosen prophets truths which human reason could not discover for itself cannot in fact operate for long before the age of writing. It was only when men had learned to write as well as to speak the truths which God chose to reveal to them that these truths could survive to govern the conduct of after generations.

On the theory outlined above, ultimate verities are revealed by God only through the utterances of men chosen for the purpose. In the version of this theory which orthodox Christians follow the final revelation was made by God himself, who, for the

purpose, became incarnate in the man Jesus of Nazareth. "The revelation was made once and for all in Christ. The Church is the witness and guardian of that revelation."<sup>2</sup> But teachers who claim to be prophets by no means agree; and how is a man to decide which are the prophets through whose mouths or pens God has chosen to reveal his truth? The Catholic replies that the Church is commissioned by God to answer such questions. And when men are in doubt as to what the inspired teachers meant, the Church is there to decide through its mouthpiece the Pope. When some British officers had been killed in Dublin, an Irish lady said to me, "I refuse to call this murder till the Pope tells me it is." The moral judgment she was free to exercise was still, in her view, subject to be overruled by the word of God expressly revealed through the mouth of the Catholic Church. But why did she think that the Catholic Church, as opposed to all other Churches, had been chosen by God as his mouthpiece? This, at least, is clear, that all men are not agreed in accepting the dogma of Papal infallibility. The Catholic accepts that dogma only because in the verdict of his own conscience and reason it is true. The voice of God as expressed through his own conscience and reason, and not the voice of the Church, is his final criterion. And so with the Protestant fundamentalist, who holds that ultimate truth is revealed not by the Church, nor yet in the Koran, but only in Scripture. In the last analysis there is nothing but his own conscience and reason to tell him that the Bible and not the Koran is the word of God.

The doctrine of authority, however we look at it, cannot be made to stand on all-fours. Any number of men in their senses will agree that two and two make four, that two sides of a triangle are greater than a third. On mathematical points we all agree in so far as our reasons are competent to grasp the

questions involved. So certain are these laws that astronomers are able to predict the movement of heavenly bodies to a nicety. The human mind constantly craves to be equally certain about the meaning of life. The doctrine of authority, that essential truths about life and God cannot be reached by men for themselves but must be revealed through supernatural means, is really the product of this craving. The theory ignores the fact that this craving for certainty could not be satisfied without destroying in men the freedom which makes them men and more than the animals. Men are free only because each man is left to judge in the light of his own reason and conscience what the ultimate verities are. In making that judgment it will help him to study what others have thought and said on the subject. But he must judge for himself who are the thinkers who think most deeply, and also how far what they have said is true. If he cannot judge for himself how far what Moses and the prophets wrote was true, a man returned from the grave cannot help him to judge.

But why should he face this irksome task from which the human spirit recoils? The answer is that he cannot escape from action, and so from deciding how to act. Such decisions, unless taken by instinct, as an animal takes them, involve finding answers to questions which never can be answered with certainty. Unless he is prepared to answer such questions for himself he abandons his human status and reverts to a life on the plane of the beasts.

The secular conflict of church and state has its roots in the doctrine of authority. The Catholic Church, divinely inspired, pronounces that Jesus forbade divorce, except for the cause of adultery and that persons divorced may not marry again. The experience of centuries under changing social conditions reveals a number of evils to which the rigid enforcement of this ordinance leads. Common-

wealths try to redress these evils by revising the law of marriage. But the Catholic Church cannot admit that a law, which it holds was divinely ordained, can ever be changed in the light of experience. Man could never discover for himself what was right or wrong in this matter; so the truth was revealed by God and ordained as a law which may not be changed.

It is of such claims that I use the word 'authority' in this chapter. I am fully aware that many beliefs upon which I act are based on 'authority', in another sense of the word. I try to be clean partly because I believe that disease is due to bacteria too small for the eye to see. To verify this belief I should have to work in a laboratory. I have not had time for such work and am satisfied to accept the teaching of biologists, who have spent their lives at the microscope. Most of the English people believe in the rule of law for similar reasons. They have had no leisure for the special studies which enable a few of us to say why we think that the rule of law is essential to human welfare. But whenever men come to believe that they know truths about life, which God has revealed by supernatural means at definite historical dates because men could never discover those truths for themselves, another situation arises. If all men could hold that belief in identical form the whole of human society would be organised in one church and state. Church and the state would be one and the same, and would take the form of a universal autocracy. The ideal of the Catholic Church would be realised. In practice this has not happened and will not happen. Various bodies hold various beliefs, which they each believe are divinely inspired. Such bodies are always in tacit conflict, which may break into open and physical conflict. Such bodies must come into conflict with states based on the principle of the infinite duty of each of its members to all.

In the first part of this book it was argued that the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus was an organisation of human society ordered in accordance with the laws of God. It is equally true to describe this conception as an organisation of human society based on realities. The laws of God, the realities, have to be learned from experience by the use of human intelligence and conscience. In a polity so ordered there is room and need for organisations in which men gather for communion with God and one with another. But where such an organisation claims to possess supernatural knowledge of truths which human reason could not divine, it must in the end bring its members into conflict with a polity based on belief that men have an infinite duty to each other, which must in the last resort be brought to the test of reason and conscience.

The world is still crowded with people who crave for certainty. There are now other creeds than the Catholic Church and Islam which appeal to this craving and demand an absolute acceptance of some authority which may not be questioned. The kind of people who in past generations found the asylum they needed in the Roman Church and in Islam are now drawn in increasing numbers to the Communist party or that of the Nazis, which demand absolute acceptance of the doctrines propounded by Marx or Hitler. The Communists, Nazis and the Catholic Church are in mortal conflict one with another, and the claim to authority ends by dividing and not by uniting the world. Yet the authoritarian doctrine leads to similar methods and institutions. In a censorship and control of the press which restricts even artistic criticism can be seen realised in the twentieth century the principle of the Index Expurgatorius. The Cheka and the Gestapo revive the methods of the Holy Inquisition. The trials they stage and the executions which follow them are a

modern counterpart of the *auto-da-fé*. That name in itself reminds us how the principle of authority has robbed the word 'faith' of its true meaning and virtue.

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.<sup>3</sup>

So principles work themselves out to their practical issues with inexorable logic. "In the long run what any society is to become will depend on what it believes, or disbelieves, about the eternal things."<sup>4</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> I am here quoting verbatim a comment made by a gifted priest of the Roman Catholic faith, to whom an earlier draft of this book was submitted for criticism.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew vii. 16-20.

<sup>4</sup> Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 250. The Home University Library.

## CHAPTER IV

### FAITH

My faith, then, is that my sense of the difference of right and wrong is valid, that final reality is God, a spirit personal in an infinitely higher degree than my own personality, and therefore supremely creative; and that God, having endowed his creatures with reason, conscience, imagination and freedom, set them to discover, little by little, what the universe is, and called them to join in the task of making it better and greater.

Do I mean by this that when God had created man in his likeness he cut himself off from communion with men? My answer is 'No'; for I myself am aware of communion with God. I have said that I do not believe that, when I am subject to doubts, God intervenes in some supernatural way to set them at rest. If I pray to be shown with absolute certainty that my sense of right and wrong is valid, I do not believe that my prayer will be answered. I must form my own judgment on the matter, and must act on that judgment. If I ask to be told whether the ultimate reality in things is of the nature of matter or spirit, I shall not be told; I shall find myself left to judge from the answer I have given to the previous question.

Whether life has a meaning is the same question put in another form, which must be answered by every thinking man for himself. I can prove that the angles contained by a triangle are together equal to two right angles, and no rational man will dispute my conclusion. But I cannot prove that life has a meaning or purpose. I know highly intelligent people who believe it has neither; but they cannot

prove what they say; and I also observe that their practical lives are not based on that theory. I have at least one kindly and dutiful friend who thinks that he holds that view. I think that in time all reasonable men will come to agree that the ultimate riddle of life cannot be answered with certainty. But I also suggest that no responsible person who takes this view would dare to base his conduct on the theory that life has no meaning or purpose, still less to persuade others to do so. The result would be seen in unspeakable chaos, the utter destruction of human society, the rapid extinction of man himself. The only practical course is to assume that life has a meaning, that right and wrong are valid distinctions, that ultimate reality is of the nature of spirit not matter, something endowed to an infinite degree with all that is best in our own personalities. Such reality we speak of as God and, if life has a meaning, then God has a purpose. But if we believe that life has a meaning and that God has a purpose, we must also construct some view as to what that meaning and purpose are. If the meaning and purpose are infinite we cannot expect to grasp them as a whole. But we have to act; and cannot escape from action, and our action will all be at random unless we judge for ourselves what the meaning of life and the purpose of God are. The power of my mind is smaller than his, less than the power of the torch which I carry to guide my footsteps at night as compared with the light of the sun. Yet the torch, when I press the button and throw its glimmer on the ground at my feet, reveals enough of the infinite universe to enable me to guide my footsteps aright. Our glimmering reasons, properly used, do, I suggest, suffice to guide us on the pathway of life. Our first duty is to keep them charged, and with lamps which will glow as brightly as possible.

If we stake our lives on the faith that life has a

meaning and God a purpose, we must not shrink from the effort of framing the best guess that we can as to what is the meaning and what the purpose. To guess at the purpose we must look at experience so far as we know it. Now human experience in its largest aspect is history. We must do our best to form some idea what the purpose of God through history has been.

The trained historian is disposed to smile at any attempt to interpret the meaning of history as a whole. At least he would think that only a scholar like Acton who had given his whole life to the study of history should ever attempt it. But Acton himself would have said, like Newton before him, that the more one knows the better one knows how much there is that one does not know. So deeply absorbed was Acton's life in the task of collecting knowledge that he left behind him a volume of essays and the plan of a history for others to write. What we have done will abide after us; but what we have known will perish with us, unless we have told it to others and written it down; and to teach and write are deeds in themselves. It is better to enter the kingdom of action halt and blind, than having both hands and both eyes to drift into everlasting futility. More knowledge of history perished with Acton than any one mind has ever acquired. All life consists in making decisions on inadequate information. The man who delays decision and waits to act till he feels that his knowledge is complete will leave such knowledge as he has on the scrap-heap. The busy politician, whose task is the making of history, cannot escape from the duty of guessing what his limited view of history means. The historian can help him by getting on record his better informed judgment. That is valuable material for men of action, but material only. They must in the end judge for themselves.

I believe that I see enough of the purpose of God to guide me in practice. I think that I help others as well as myself by trying to state as well as I can what I think I see. I believe that the meaning and purpose of life is creation. I think the supreme Creator has brought into being creatures who can join in the work of creation because he has given them power of discovering for themselves some knowledge of what he is and how he is working. He has given them freedom to use or neglect this power, to attempt or neglect the work of creation, without which they would only be blind mechanical instruments in his hands. He has, in a word, given them something of his own power to originate things for themselves. He means them to develop this power to the full, to use their reason and conscience to the utmost capacity. But this they could not do if he intervened to set things right when they go wrong. I do not believe that God intervenes at given moments to deflect the course of events which human activity has produced. I believe that he means men to judge for themselves what is better or worse, by seeing and feeling the results of what they have done. I do not believe that at given moments he intervened to reveal secrets the answer to which human intelligence could not discover. I think that he set us to seek the answers, to keep on seeking, and to judge what they are, better and better, the more we study the results of our answers. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."<sup>1</sup>

Does all this mean that God, having planted in man some sparks of his own nature, reason and conscience, the power to distinguish good and evil, the creative faculty, had then no further succour to give him? Does it mean that God and man are so much apart that no intercourse between them is possible? My answer to that question lies in my view of God as supreme personality.

To me the reality of which I am fully and directly aware is my own personality. Through my senses I am conscious of other personalities in the world than my own. Some of them seem better than others, to have nobler qualities than others, to be higher personalities. The highest thing I see in them is a passion to do good to others rather than themselves, a passion which is best described as love. The records of history lead me to believe that in one man at any rate, Jesus of Nazareth, this passion was completely developed. In his teaching and life and death I see personality at its highest, a man who had so mastered his own desires that his whole being was devoted to the welfare of others. His life is the crown of human experience. It enabled men thereafter to grasp what human personality at its highest can be. If final reality is something of the nature of my own personality raised to the infinite scale, the personality of Jesus is the highest clue that men have to the nature of God. He told us that God is love, and our reason and conscience respond to the thought. But his life and death make us see, as nothing else can, what that formula means. If God is love he must desire beyond all things communion with men, with the creatures he loves. I believe that, because I desire above all things communion with those that I love. In the love of others I find the best corrective of evil in myself. I was born with little or no sense of honesty or truth, but I loved others in whom the sense of honesty and truth was greater than my own. I learned to feel the horror of lies by seeing that those I loved abhorred a lie. I learned to dislike uncleanness by witnessing the love of purity in others. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."<sup>2</sup> Advice that friends have given me, sermons I have heard, books I have read, have helped at times. But of this I am sure that a much stronger force for good in my life has come from feel-

ing the goodness in people I knew, or of whom I have heard and read, most of all, the supreme goodness of Jesus of Nazareth.

My view is that when God had bestowed on his creatures reason to discern right from wrong, freedom to choose between them, imagination, power to create, he meant them to use these faculties to divine reality as the necessary basis of further creation. If once I decide to direct my practical conduct by a faith that my sense of right and wrong is valid and true I shall see what is best in men as the key to reality. I shall think of reality as the best that I know in men, raised to the infinite scale. The more fully I grasp this idea and act on it, the more closely do I come into touch with reality and therefore into communion with God. It rests with man to establish with God a communion which God always and utterly desires. I believe this communion with final reality, with absolute though invisible goodness, is as real as the intercourse I enjoy with people better than myself. I know by experience the effect on myself of personal contact with friends better than myself. I know, too, the effect of hearing and reading of lives better than my own, pre-eminently that of Jesus of Nazareth. When I think of reality as all such goodness personified in the highest degree, and worship it as such, I am in direct communion with that reality. I am in his company. He draws me nearer his infinite heights than the best of my human friends, the persons I know through my senses. It is this that I mean by worship and prayer, and the influence they have on my life.

When Moses conceived the Hebrew God, Yahwe, as the spirit of righteousness, he realised and taught that any attempt to depict him in visible form was a sin. The legends which grew round the name of Moses fell away from this great conception. They tell us how Moses conversed with God in the clefts of

Horeb, and so desired to get some glimpse of his infinite person that God allowed Moses to see his back.<sup>3</sup> The story shows how little the scribes who recorded Mosaic tradition had grasped the significance of his teaching. This was left to prophets, especially to the writer who gave us the story of Elijah. It is not through our senses, or through things we can grasp through our senses, that we talk with God. "The still, small voice" which every man hears, though not with his ears, is the voice of God. To interpret its meaning is a task for man's own constructive reason, which is light from the mind of God, through which he can get a glimpse of reality.

I believe that a man can in his soul have such direct and immediate intercourse with God as he himself wills to have, and through it draw nearer to God and become more like him. So far as we get into touch with reality, we create further reality. But men get into nearer touch with reality by doing good as well as by seeking to apprehend what goodness is. I have known people who had no intellectual belief in God and who thought that men ceased to exist when they died, but whose lives were devoted to the service of others. In my view such people by doing good, and obeying a moral sense which they do not seek to explain, have established contact with one side of reality. They acquire a real communion with God, whom they do not recognise, and through that communion become more like him. Communion with God through our own souls is only one form of contact with reality, though an all-important form. The effort in men to think and act in obedience to the voice of duty within them is itself communion with God, even for those whose minds are unable to conceive reality as something personal like themselves, though infinitely more so—in other words, to believe in God.

"Religion", says Whitehead, "is solitariness; and if you are never solitary, you are never religious".<sup>4</sup> There must be direct communion of the several creature with the Creator, prayer. Yet religion cannot exist in the full sense of the word unless men also enter into communion with God in communion one with another. For the sense of religion to develop there must be churches, organised churches, and public worship. The emphasis laid by the Catholic Church on worship as adoration is tinged by the Hebrew conception of God as an oriental monarch. In the teaching of Jesus, God is conceived as a father, and men as his children, brethren one with another. The word 'adore' can also be used of the members of a family who 'worship' each other, and, because they so feel, take intense delight in each other's society. The essence of this feeling is a sense of devotion which leads each member of a family to forget himself and think only of his parents and brethren. Such feelings will find their expression in a large variety of symbols and forms. Those in whom the æsthetic sense is more highly developed will find that music and art can be used to express them. Those to whose minds abstract thought rather than sense appeals, may prefer to gather in bare walls to unite in extempore prayer and to listen to sermons. Men view reality as they view a mountain from different sides, and there must be various kinds of worship to suit the different orders of mind. But in all genuine worship one element is supreme. "God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."<sup>5</sup> The essential feature of worship, private or public, is the recognition of reality as belonging to the order of spirit. To 'recognise' in the true sense of the word is to translate belief into action, to create a human society on the basis of reality, to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Matthew vii. 7.
- <sup>2</sup> John xii. 32.
- <sup>3</sup> Exodus xxxiii. 23.
- <sup>4</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 7. Cambridge University Press.
- <sup>5</sup> John iv. 24.

## CHAPTER V

### PRINCIPLE REALISED IN PRACTICE

THE view of reality argued in the previous chapters may now be summarised briefly before we go on to see where it leads us in practice. I believe that reason and conscience and a sense of freedom to choose between right and wrong are qualities implanted by God in his creatures, an act of creation whereby he made men in his own likeness. But having revealed himself in this way to every creature worthy to be called a man, he committed to man the immense task of discovering for himself little by little the nature of reality, of joining with him in the work of creation by enlarging the sphere of reality. I do not believe that when, centuries before the Christian era, man had devised for himself the art of writing and for less than a century after that era, God intervened specially to reveal to mankind truths which they could not discover for themselves. I think that any idea that in some supernatural way God will reveal to a man what he ought, or ought not, to do in particular cases is a cardinal error. Such teaching encourages men to evade their primary duty of using and training their reason and practical judgment which God has given to men as their guide. Nor do I think that when things go seriously wrong with the world God intervenes to set them right. I think he has laid that task wholly on men themselves, and leaves them to learn from their own mistakes how to avoid them. The calamities we bring on ourselves are signposts which mark wrong turns we have taken. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"—through the agency of Nature herself. I do not believe in miracles, either as

evidence of divine revelation or changing the course of events brought about by Nature or human action. God is not a *deus ex machina*. I think he has given us faculties which enable us to picture what he is like, what reality is. By employing these faculties we come to know him, not only in the sense that we know a fact, but also in the sense that we know a friend and enjoy his society. By using my reason to imagine what God must be as personified goodness and love, I associate with God, as with a friend better than myself. I am drawn to him and partake of his nature and strength. I see him as a person immeasurably greater than the greatest of men, and therefore creative; as one who by the law of his nature would bring into being creatures to share in his work of creation, who could therefore think and will for themselves.

To contrast the society in which we live in all its complexity with the lives led perhaps for a million years by our ancestors in caves and holes in the earth, in a state little removed from that of the beasts, is to get some glimpse of the work of creation on which man is engaged. But here let us note how far the task of further creation depends on knowledge of what is already created. This alone makes writing of all inventions the most momentous. Writing is the great repository in which all that is worth preserving in human thought can be stored and treasured so long as society exists to use it. So vast is the storehouse, and so rich and varied its contents, that priceless treasures are at times overlaid and buried by the mere mass of less valuable matter which is afterwards lodged in the vaults. In his recent lectures Dr. Scott Lidgett<sup>1</sup> has shown how Isaiah, and still more Jesus, rose from the vision of God as a monarch, which prevails in the Old Testament, to the vision of God as a father, which prevails in the New Testament. The transition from God conceived as personified power,

however righteous the power, to God conceived as personified love was of all contributions to human thought the most precious and fruitful. As Dr. Scott Lidgett points out, the idea was quickly forgotten and Christendom reverted till recent times to thinking of God as embodying power divorced from love, as a sovereign rather than a father.

The same has happened to much that was best in Greek as well as in Hebrew thought. The Greeks approached their problems of life from a standpoint widely removed from that of the Hebrews. The children of Israel lived in a part of the world and a state of society controlled by powerful monarchies. It was hard for them to think of God otherwise than as a king. The insight of genius can at times transcend experience, as in Isaiah, who was able to picture God as inspired by feelings more loving and tender than any human monarch had shown. Yet Hebrew thought in the Old Testament seldom gets far from the idea of sovereignty and power as the dominant aspect of Jehovah. Greek thought developed in surroundings where kingly power was felt mainly as a distant menace, a menace which Greek valour in the Persian wars was able to repel and hold at a distance. For the first time in human experience a kind of government was realised in Greek cities which did not depend on kingly authority. To the Hebrew mind it was natural to think of duty, as the duty of obedience to a sovereign God. It was this duty of obedience to a supernatural authority which united the children of Israel. The end and object of life was comprised in obeying divine commands as conveyed and expressed through the mouths of the prophets. In a city like Athens such ideas were impossible, and thinkers were forced to approach the problem of life from a different angle. To them duty was first and foremost a human relation. It was this in men which made them something more than the

beasts. It was this which bound them together in a city or state for the good of which each member was expected to live and work, and if need be to die. The fulfilment of duty, the attainment of goodness, was the end and object of life.

The Greek saw clearly enough that this end could not be attained by a man living in isolation. He must live in an organised society, however small, which he called a *πόλις* or state, the city in which the Greek citizen lived. To his fellow-citizen in this state he owed an unlimited duty. From this it followed that the state could make on each of its members an unlimited claim. It could call on the citizen to die if necessary, and therefore to sacrifice everything in life. The citizen was bound to obey that call; but with one exception. The state itself was merely a number of human beings, and liable to err. It might, therefore, command the citizen to do something which he felt was utterly destructive of goodness, the end and object of the state itself. In that extreme case the citizen must, for the sake of his fellow-citizens, refuse to obey their mandate, and must face all the consequences involved to himself. This, however, was clear, that the citizen, in all that he did, must study the interests of his fellow-citizens wherever those interests came into conflict with his own. His real good could be attained only by seeking the good of others.

In actual fact men often fail to act in accordance with this principle. To a great extent they act as though the interests of others were subordinate to their own. They are constantly choosing the worse rather than the better. The existence of evil, however hard to explain, is a fact to be faced. In a world where everyone was perfectly free to do as he pleased the morally unfit would survive, the worse would tend to destroy the better. In the primitive family this tendency is curbed by the natural authority of

the head of the family—the father. As the family grows this parental authority can be stretched, to a certain extent, to ensure sufficient obedience to the chief or head of a tribe. When one tribe has conquered and subdued a number of others the idea of kingship begins to emerge. The power of the conquering chief is accepted as proof of his supernatural authority, and the state in its crudest form appears as monarchy.

The improved security which a monarch maintains enables his subjects to develop a life better on the whole than is possible under tribal conditions. This is so because the will of the monarch is law; and law is essential to order for two practical reasons. The worse man must be restrained from killing the better at will. The subject must also contribute some of his wealth to the general costs of the state. If this were left to the option of each, the more loyal subjects would be ruined by having to furnish what the less loyal subjects failed to contribute. The king invokes the loyalty of those who believe in his supernatural authority to enforce his behests. But apart from this question of willingness to obey, there is also the factor that men honestly differ as to what they should do, if only because the knowledge of each is narrowly limited.

We can see this at once, if we think what discipline means to an army. A thousand men with arms in their hands are powerless as a body, so long as each soldier acts on his own initiative. The situation is changed if they come to regard one of their number as authorised to command the rest. If some of them refuse to obey his authority, that authority will still be effective if others in sufficient numbers obey his orders to arrest and, perhaps, to execute mutineers. But even if all the thousand are perfectly ready to obey the leader, they still cannot move as a body this way or that, right or left, backwards or forwards, except at his orders. He must decide for them which way to move,

and convey his decisions in words of command they can hear. So government is necessary to order for more than one reason. It is necessary because some men are less ready than others to put the general interest before their own. It is also necessary to save people from acting at cross-purposes. They cannot know how to act in the general interest unless a certain amount of direction is given them from without.

Monarchy depends on the primitive belief that the monarch is clothed with divine authority and also with knowledge divinely inspired as to how he should govern. It depends on the loyalty of the subject to the king. A monarch can rule, so long as he has subjects enough willing to enforce his commands on rebels. But the system rests on foundations which do not go down to the ultimate rock of realities. It is founded on powdered rock, which is sand. There are elements of truth in the principle of authority, but truth in so broken and pulverised a form that it cannot support an enduring structure. No student of history could argue that kings on the whole have decided practical questions more wisely than men of average ability. A human mind will judge not better but worse, if it falsely conceives that God himself has revealed its ideas and prompted its wishes. It is dangerous, indeed, for a mere man to mistake his own mind for the mind of God. The pages of history allow us to see how this notion affected a somewhat ridiculous monarch, King Frederick William IV. of Prussia.

The royal crown seemed to him surrounded by a mystic radiance, which became for him who wore it the source of a divine inspiration not vouchsafed to other mortals. He said once, in 1844, to Bunsen: 'You all mean well by me, and are very skilful in executing plans; but there are certain things that no one but a king can know, which I myself did not know when I was Crown Prince, and have perceived only since I became King'.<sup>2</sup>

The effect on a people who accept such a theory of government is also sufficiently plain. The Germans as a people are in vigour and intellect admittedly second to none. The military empire, established by Frederick William's successors, at the height of its power was brought to ruin by lack of political judgment in those who controlled it. Just before the catastrophe von Bülow, the German chancellor, described his people as "political asses", and history will write him down as a flagrant example of his own criticism. Once more Germany is seeking salvation in the leadership of "a man sent from God."

The notion that any enduring structure of society can be founded on man's duty to God is a dangerous quicksand, until we have grasped the truth rendered explicit by Jesus, that man's duty to God can only be rendered in so far as each man renders his duty to men. Our duty to God and our duty to our neighbour are aspects of a whole, as inseparable as the convex and concave sides of an arc. And who are a man's neighbours but all those who stand in need of man's help? The enduring society must be one founded on man's duty to man, as the only means of rendering man's duty to God. The first system of society which sank its foundations down to this bed-rock was the Greek Commonwealth. Too slight and imperfect to survive long, it revealed to mankind a secret which, once found, was preserved in the literature of Greece. So preserved it can never be finally lost.

In the Greek Commonwealth the unlimited devotion of each citizen to his fellow-citizens was presumed. He was called on to render, if necessary, life itself for the sake of his fellow-citizens. The right of the Commonwealth to demand an unlimited sacrifice of each to all was presumed. Yet the citizen did not exist for the sake of the state. In the last analysis the state existed for the sake of the citizens. And this was so because goodness is more important to a man

than his physical life. It is in man's interest to die for the benefit of others rather than to live for the benefit of himself. This explains what the Greeks meant by saying that the state exists for the sake of goodness.

Men cannot, however, serve each other so long as each is left to judge for himself what he ought to do at every moment. In this respect the commonwealth is faced by exactly the same difficulty as the monarchy. Men are not all good or equally good. A large number of citizens will constantly fail in their duty. The commonwealth, to exist, must be able to use force where necessary to exact from the citizen a minimum of duty. The use of force by the commonwealth is involved in the principle that an infinite duty is owed by each to all. The unlimited claim of the commonwealth on the citizens to obey it rests on that principle. If each owes an unlimited duty to the state, the duty of using force when called on to do so is clearly included. To this a thinker like Tolstoy objects that the use of compulsion is always wrong, and bases his view upon certain commands which he thinks that Jesus uttered. He supposes for instance that when Jesus commanded Peter to put up his sword on one special occasion he meant to prohibit the use of force in all human affairs. Did he really think that when Jesus cleansed his Father's house, the usurers yielded to moral persuasion? The Quaker objection to the use of force is, I suppose, prompted by the constant and flagrant abuse of force in human affairs. But those who accept the assumption that an increase of goodness in men is the end and object of life cannot accept the dogma that force is never permissible, because a general and continuous increase of goodness is possible only in a state of society so organised that those who are better control those who are worse, by force when necessary. They are driven back on the principle stated by Admiral Mahan: "The function of force in human affairs is to give

moral ideas time to take root." It is not even true to say that the state could exist without force if all its citizens were perfectly virtuous, unless we also assume that they all were perfectly wise, and could always agree on every point. As noticed above, a regiment of men, however obedient, cannot move this way or that except in obedience to the orders of a leader. In a state there must be authority to tell men how to act and when.

In a monarchy the commands come from the king, normally expressed in the laws which he makes. In the Greek Commonwealth there was no king, but none the less there was sovereign authority expressed in the laws made by the citizens. The law was paramount and every citizen was bound to obey it. The officers appointed under the law were bound no less. To improve the law in the interests of the citizens themselves was the primary duty of citizens, their highest function. Their intellect as well as their conscience was exercised in the task. It was thus that the commonwealth existed in the fullest sense for the sake of promoting goodness in its members. The whole system depended for its working from hour to hour, and from day to day, on calling into active play the sense of duty in each to all.

When the Greeks conceived that the state exists for the sake of goodness—to improve the quality of its own members—they had reached a truth of primary importance to the future of mankind. They had realised how far the growth of a human mind depends, not merely upon what it is taught, nor even upon the example of others, but also upon the structure of society in which it grows up. Let us take a simple example. Suppose that two twin brothers are born in Russia as like as two twins can be, and that soon after their birth one is taken to the United States and is there reared as an American citizen whilst the other remains in Russia. Let us further

suppose that they do not again meet till both are thirty years old. One can then imagine how great the difference between the two brothers will have become. It will in the main be that which two widely differing polities have impressed on their two similar natures, a difference as great as that impressed by two different seals on two pieces of exactly similar wax. Had both the brothers remained in Russia, or had both been taken to the United States, they would have remained as like each other as twins usually are.

The Greeks were the first to realise how largely the structure of society determines the character of those who grow up in that structure. They realised the importance of the mould into which the metal of human souls, while still fluid and plastic, is run. Of the manifold ways of improving men they saw, as the most important, the improvement of the social structure in which they grew up. This far they saw, that the structure of the state, to mould the character of its members aright, must be based on reality. Such reality they conceived was goodness, not pleasure, that instinct in men which made them men, that sense of duty which prompted them to see their own good in seeking the good of others than themselves. This instinct they saw as the vitalising principle of the state, which alone held it together, and endowed it with the qualities of a living organism. Their life in cities, protected by seas and mountains, had enabled them to realise states which applied this principle to groups consisting at most of some thousands of citizens. These groups were small enough to meet and discuss what was best for the group as a whole, to embody conclusions reached in laws, to which every citizen was expected or made to conform. They did not see how the principle could ever be brought to apply to groups of citizens too large to meet for discussion, or to frame laws in this way. They saw the commonwealth as an institution

peculiar to Greeks, but they never saw how to apply it even to Greece as a whole. Mankind at large, the barbarian world, was beyond the range of this principle. So Aristotle thought, as Ezekiel had thought, that the care of a righteous God was limited to the Hebrews. The Gentiles were beyond it.

A greater than Aristotle or Ezekiel was needed to grasp the essential link which connected the Hebrew and Greek conceptions. The fatherhood of God meant the brotherhood of man, the brotherhood not merely of Jew with Jew, or Greek with Greek, but of Jew with Greek, of man with man. The sense of duty in men to each other was what bound them together and bound them to God. This, not pleasure, was the ultimate element of value in life. To increase and perfect this sense as the principle of life was the end and object of human existence. But this could not be done merely by teaching or preaching, nor yet by example, nor yet by prayer or intercourse with God. The structure of human society itself must be based on the laws of God, on realities. The supreme task was to bring into being an order of society in which the infinite duty of each to all was fully expressed, applied, and called into exercise.

The task of seeing what this idea would mean in practice remained to be thought out in the light of experience by future generations of men. A vast project of creation was outlined by Jesus and left to those who followed him to realise. We have now better ideas of what creation means than men had in his day. We no longer see the world and the forms of life which people it, each fashioned in turn by the hand of a master craftsman. We now see no definite moment in time when man appeared on the earth as distinct from the animals. And so it is with the institutions which man is called to create for himself in partnership with God. The Kingdom of Heaven, the City of God, the divine commonwealth, the fabric

of society bound together by the infinite duty of each to all, is not to be realised as the author of Genesis thought that order issued from chaos. It was something which dawned in the world without observation. It was first reduced to practice in Greece, on a tiny and wholly inadequate scale, by men who did not at all realise what they had done. In course of time when they came to examine it they got some glimmering of the principle which inspired its working. They also began to realise its marvellous reactions on the characters of those who worked it. But they did not see that the principle which inspired it was universal and could not in the end be limited to Greeks, still less to units so small as the Greek cities. Its essential idea, as grasped and expressed by Jesus, was smothered and obscured by the Roman Empire. A thousand years after his time it began to emerge again, in Alpine communes, in Italian cities, but also on the national scale in England. A group larger than a city, a whole nation, began to evolve a polity based on the infinite duty of men to each other. As in Greece men did it, not knowing at all what they did, not clearly discerning the principle which inspired their own creation. The principle was carried in the minds of emigrants accustomed to its working, and reproduced in distant parts of the world. Its gradual effect on the character of the people who governed themselves in this way attracted the notice of peoples who still lived under monarchies. They also aspired to govern themselves, though not always with equal success. Still in one way and another a number of national commonwealths came into being.

We have seen how priceless treasures of thought get buried and lost to sight in the vast and ever-increasing store-house of human records. The idea of God as a father rather than a sovereign which was given to the world in its fullness by Jesus was largely lost and only recovered in the nineteenth century.

The great Greek conception that goodness is the end and object of life, that the state exists to enable men to realise and perfect the goodness in them, has been lost to sight in much the same way.

It is clearly of vital importance that each generation should go through the great store-house of human thought, see what is there, and judge for itself what is really important and worth preserving. Happily the art of writing, rendered more efficacious by the art of printing, preserves from destruction the profoundest conceptions that have once dawned on the human mind. But writing and printing also preserve less valuable products of thought in ever-accumulating masses. The museum of literature grows so vast that we spend our time in its chambers lost in wonder and curiosity. This indestructible store-house of treasures is defeating its own object unless we compel ourselves to value the contents. We are apt to get lost in the interest of knowing what this man or that man has thought. Our primary business is to think for ourselves how far what he thought was the truth. We cannot evade this task. Our thinking can never be done for us once for all. Each generation must judge for itself what is more or less true in recorded thought. And in making this judgment each must remember the inexorable need which drives him to judge. We can none of us evade the necessity of action. Our mere inaction is affecting the lives of others. How to act, not how to think, is the ultimate problem of life. We are driven to thought because we find that thought is the only guide for action. Each man in each generation must employ this as his test in taking stock of the heritage of thought. When we ask ourselves which conceptions are truer than others, we must in the last resort be thinking how these conceptions will operate as a guide to our conduct, and therefore as a guide which we recommend others to follow.

If, indeed, it behoves us to make these judgments it also behoves us to express them as clearly as lies in our power. So far as we state with clearness the aspects of truth which we think we see, so far do we make it easier for those who follow us to test the value of what we have said. I sometimes wonder whether writers who puzzle their readers have thought out what they are trying to say. Is anything worth saying unless we can make it intelligible? A man who has grasped one real aspect of truth is in no real danger of thinking he has grasped the truth on all its sides. He views it as a glimpse of the infinite, of something too great for his limited human mind to grasp as a whole. The glimpse he sees as a flash-light which shows him at least where better to plant his feet on the ground before him. But the sense of so much beyond the ray that he cannot understand is itself a reason why he should keep his flash-light steady and clear, so that others can see what its limits are.

It is for this reason that I find myself driven to say in the plainest words I can find what I think are the truest conceptions in the whole range of recorded thought, so far as I know it. Nor shall I be troubled by the charge of repeating it if by doing so I succeed in making it clear to others what I mean. My own personality, and other personalities, these impalpable beings which think and act and know, are the only realities of which I am sure. I believe that reality as a whole is something of that kind, of which our own personalities are the outcome and creation. This supreme personality, I believe, is invested with all our faculties to an infinite degree. I think that God is goodness in personal form, and that men are of him and like him in so far as they achieve goodness. The end and object of human life is to be like God, to achieve more goodness and in doing so to join in his ceaseless work of creation. I think this idea of God

was mainly reached through Hebrew conceptions. For both Hebrew and Greek, goodness finds its creative expression in the conduct of men to each other; they came to see that, in serving each other, men serve God and become like him. The Greeks were the first to realise clearly that this could only be done in so far as men were organised for mutual service, on the principle of the infinite duty of each to all. They showed in fact that a state so organised on the scale of a city could raise the life of its citizens to a plane higher than men had reached before. In modern times we have shown that the principle need not be limited to a city but can be made to apply to nations as a whole. We have seen that this can be done where a people have developed a certain degree of loyalty one to another. We have also seen how a commonwealth by exercising that sense of mutual loyalty tends to develop it, and so strengthen the working of the commonwealth.

All this has not prevented the nations of the world from falling into disastrous conflict one with another. The suffering which nations have inflicted on each other has gravely deranged the whole order of human society. It has made more difficult the working of commonwealths, has led men to doubt their value as institutions, and to great confusion of thought. Men have fallen into thinking and acting as though material things were the end and object of life. The explicit doctrine that matter, not spirit, is the ultimate reality has obtained such vogue that one of the greatest nations has now organised its life on this basis, and is calling on others to follow its lead.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Scott Lidgett, *The Victorian Transformation of Theology*. Epworth Press.

<sup>2</sup> Von Sybel, *The Founding of the German Empire*, vol. I. pp. 113, 114. Quoting from *Preuss. Jahrbücher*, IV. vol. 63, p. 528.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN ITS APPLICATION

IN Chapter I. I dared to suggest that a key can be found to confused situations, if we pause to consider what is the end we are trying to attain. To know the end we must first decide in our own minds how we conceive the nature of reality. And if we decide that reality is of the nature of spirit, something of the nature of our own personalities seen at their highest, we have then to ask why it is that institutions based on that principle have so miscarried, have failed so far to rescue the world from confusion.

The answer, I suggest, to this problem is that we still have a long way to go in reducing to practice our guess at the nature of reality—the principle that the duty which each man owes to all his fellows has no limits. In ancient Greece men learned to apply that principle to the government of cities; but the word 'all' was limited to a mere handful of citizens. They denied that such loyalty could be rendered effective in a group too large to be gathered in one meeting. So this loyalty of the citizen to the city meant that the cities fought one another and were constantly seeking to injure each other. The unlimited duty of each individual to his city was at times called into play to enable that city to injure and destroy others outside it.

In the modern world the principle has been raised to a higher power. It has now been applied not to thousands, but millions. In America more than a hundred million are organised as one commonwealth, and the organisation is effective. When it entered the Great War its government immediately

asserted the right to send each and all of its citizens to face torture and death. The conscription it ordered was effective, and why? Because in America a sufficient number of citizens were not only prepared to face death when ordered to do so, but were also prepared to enforce those orders on others less loyal to the state than themselves. The American Commonwealth was effectively based on the principle of the infinite duty of each to all. But that 'all' is still but a section of human beings, though a large one. The American citizen is taught to think of American interests as paramount, as the Englishman is also encouraged to think of his own national interests as the final criterion of political decisions. If British and American interests clash, the loyalty of each to his nation may be called into play, as it was in the war of 1812. Two commonwealths may evoke the loyalty of their citizens to injure each other.

As a matter of fact, we feel that a British-American war is very unlikely. Nor are we in great fear of a war between countries like France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway or Sweden. The fear of war which overshadows the world in fact arises from those countries which up to the Great War were ruled by autocracies based on divine right which depended largely, as all such governments must, on organised force. The idea of force as the ruling factor in human affairs was so ingrained in the minds of their subjects that, when they had lost their faith in divine authority, they felt and acted as though force was the final sanction and the dominant factor in human affairs. They found it difficult to grasp a system of government based on the duty of men to each other, which used force, but only in so far as might be needed to maintain the system, 'to give moral ideas time to take root'.

The spirit which inspired the Marxian creed was revolt against the manifest injustice endured by the

great majority under the existing order. Marx seems to have thought that, if the existing order could once be destroyed, with all that it stood for, the classes, religion, the state and especially property, the need for force in human affairs would vanish. If private property were abolished men all over the world could be trusted to behave justly to one another. But he could not conceive that the change he desired could be effected except by a final and consummate use of force. The proletariat must, to begin with, appoint dictators, authorised to organise and exercise force in a manner more ruthless than tsars or kaisers had ever attempted. His creed was adopted and his plan of campaign closely followed in Russia. But neither Marx nor Lenin had realised how the classes they threatened in western countries could adapt these methods in their own defence. In Italy and Germany dictatorships sprang into being with nationalism based on force as a creed opposed to communism. Their example was quickly followed by countries in Europe where self-governing institutions had taken no root. A great part of Europe and Asia is now ruled by autocracies based on force. Their antagonisms one with another and also to the commonwealths threaten the peace of the world.

If society consisted only of commonwealths, the danger of war would, I think, be remote. If it came to consist entirely of dictatorships based on force, whether communist or fascist, the constant outbreak of wars, liable to involve the world as a whole, would, I believe, be inevitable. If this view is broadly correct (and I think that most trained observers would agree with it) I cannot resist the conviction that the main security for the maintenance of peace is the character and outlook developed by people who have long had the experience of governing themselves, that the greatest danger to peace arises from the irresponsible temper and outlook developed

under autocracies which, from their nature, come to regard their own power as the one object of all policy. Why is it that the efforts of leaders in the more enlightened countries to banish the fear of war from the world so utterly fail to achieve what they seek? The course of events will not, I predict, be released from the vicious circle in which they are moving till the practical statesmen who seek to direct them have begun to ask themselves anew what is the ultimate goal they are trying to achieve for those they rule. The essential evil is not, I submit, war and the miseries and evil which it brings in its train, nor is peace the essential good.

To regard peace as the end and object of policy in international affairs is, I believe, as great a mistake as it is to regard the maintenance of order as the end and object of domestic policy. War between states and disorder within them are the visible symptoms of a malady deeper than the sufferings they inflict, a malady which cannot be cured merely by anointing the sores it produces. The essential disease is a failure in the system to develop in men the sense of duty they owe to each other. The ultimate remedy lies in raising the standard of moral health in every locality and every department of human society. There is, I suggest, no public question, however local, which cannot, and should not, be brought to this test. In a previous chapter I have shown how an irrigation problem in India deserves to be handled from this standpoint. Let me now illustrate this point by a problem familiar to English readers.

A century ago the application of steam power to production in factories and to transport produced that recognised evil the slums. The worst feature of slums was, I suggest, the segregation of rich and poor in separate communities, where they lost sight of their duty one to another. We are trying to remedy this evil at a cost enormously greater than would

have been needed to prevent its development. The internal combustion engine applied to transport is now creating a different problem. To provide suitable roads for the motor hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent on improving their surface and making them safe for the faster traffic which modern conditions require. The defective state of the law has made it profitable for landowners to build the houses which people need along the frontage of these roads. The children who live in them run straight from their doors or gates into arteries of traffic far more dangerous than the main line of a railway. The danger is greatly enhanced by the fact that the vehicles serving the houses have to stand in the road itself, narrowing and confusing the passage available for traffic, and obscuring the view alike to pedestrians and drivers. In a road so fringed with houses five people on the average are killed where one only was killed before the houses were built. It has also been shown that the cost of providing public services, schools, playing grounds, churches, etc., is enormously greater for 10,000 people housed along main roads than if they were housed in a properly planned community, a little removed from the main artery of traffic. In result vast profits are reaped by the land-owner and speculative builder. The loss falls on those at whose cost the road has been built, and also on those who are housed along it. This process is fast converting the main roads through England into long, continuous streets. From the millions who pass along them the beautiful countryside is concealed by houses. These manifold evils have led to a public outcry for a change in the present law and for housing the people in properly planned townships.

My suggestion is that all such problems can and should be brought to the test of one final question—how will the change proposed affect the people to whom it is applied, in diminishing or increasing their

sense of duty one to another? To put the same question in another way, how will the change proposed affect their capacity for governing themselves? The answer is scarcely open to dispute. Ten thousand people housed in a garden city like Welwyn are physically able to control their own local affairs. They develop a sense of community, a regard for the public need and a habit of putting it before their own several desires. The same number of people housed in a thin line for miles up the Great North Road can develop no sense of community. Their local interests must be cared for by some much larger unit, by the county or the government itself, which means, in fact, by some external bureaucracy. Their sense of duty to each other cannot be developed by exercise in respect of their local affairs.

Where care has been taken to enable people to manage their own local affairs a sense of public duty will develop little by little, which in time will make itself felt in wider political fields. A people so organised will vote with a deeper sense of their public duty at national elections. The parliaments and governments they elect will reflect that temper. Majorities will grow more careful not to assert their power unreasonably over minorities. They develop the faculty of seeing the public interest as a whole, and also the habit of putting it before their own. In the international field a people so disciplined will be less ready to press national claims to the point of war than a people who are trained only to blind obedience to one ruler.

The particular cases of social reform here cited may serve to remind us how much more there is in the process of fitting a people to govern themselves than questions of franchise—of giving them votes. No public question is so small or so local that it cannot be handled in a way to accustom each person in the locality to consider the public interest as his own.

The principle of the commonwealth is a catholic principle in the truest and fullest sense of the word. It calls upon all the children of men by every act which affects their mutual relations to contribute something to the structure of human society as a whole, to the temple of God and man upon earth. The Indian or Chinese peasant who urges his neighbours to remove filth through the agency of the village council is bringing a little nearer the day when the growing volume of spiritual life will issue in a commonwealth wide enough to include first his nation and then all human beings, and establish the rule of law for them all. In the meetings of neighbours who have gathered in the evening to discuss how the village can be drained, or cleaner water can be brought to its homes, I think that our Lord would see an expression of the principle he typified in the consecration of food and drink.<sup>1</sup> The importance of any activity, however local and detailed in character, which tends to exercise faculty in men for serving each other cannot be overstated. It was once said of England that she saved herself by her exertions, and by her example saved the world. But the same can be said of every self-governing community. The success they achieve is not confined to themselves. One of the strongest factors in extending and improving local self-government throughout the world has been the fifty years' record of the London County Council. On the continent of Europe the system of government maintained in Switzerland is perhaps the most formidable menace to the despotisms which surround it. The development of national commonwealths, in accordance with the principle of their being, and in all their internal organs, is a vital means for extending that principle to the rest of the world in which it is denied. If the organisation of human society as one commonwealth is the true goal of human endeavour, the establish-

ment throughout the world of local self-government and of national commonwealths is a necessary step to that goal.

Here I would urge is a guiding principle which can be applied by all who grasp it to public affairs in all their aspects, at all times and in all parts of the world. When building a dam it does not suffice to consider its value as insurance against famine in years of drought. To make two blades of grass spring up where only one sprang before, or to give every peasant a fowl in his pot, are means to an end, not ends in themselves. To enable more people to be born and live is itself but a means to an end. "Man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." On the lips of the Master the language of philosophy was rendered in words which minds too simple to know what philosophy means could grasp. Ultimate values are things of the spirit and not material. They can be achieved in so far as men can believe this is so. The people who will live on the irrigated area ought to be settled in such manner that they may learn by exercise to develop their sense of duty one to another. So also with town planning. It is not enough to keep the main roads open to traffic, to reduce the danger to life on them, to enable people to live under healthier conditions and at lower cost. Beyond all this is the paramount object of enabling neighbours to see and discharge their mutual duties. By so doing and not otherwise the end and object of human life is attained. To bring this about is the business of government. The ultimate objects which states exist to achieve are not things material but things of the spirit.

There is, I submit, infinite scope for developing the internal structure of states in such manner as to exercise even more fully the sense of duty men have to each other. But this of itself will not suffice. In

states which remain fractions of human society, however large, the infinite duty of each to all can never be fully realised. We can see this when the principle was first reduced to political terms in the civic commonwealths of Greece. I, personally, cannot agree with the view constantly urged by scholars that life has never been lived at so high a level as in Athens. It is true that Athens produced monuments of thought, literature and art seldom if ever surpassed. They remain with us to-day, an imperishable evidence of her greatness. That greatness lies in the germs of truth they contained, but time was needed to develop these germs and apply them to facts. Implicit in Greek ideas was a principle fatal to slavery. Yet the greatest of Greek philosophers accepted slavery as an institution. Athenian life was based on it. Athenian citizens regarded the infinite duty of each to all as propounded by Pericles and Socrates as limited to themselves. In dealing with other democracies they recognised no right but the might of the stronger. Their failure to conceive the principle of the commonwealth on a national scale accomplished the ruin of Greece. Had the Greeks achieved a national commonwealth and held their own against Rome in the west as they held their own against Persia in the east, history would have followed a different course and the state of human society would, I believe, be far in advance of what it now is. But they knew not the day of their visitation. The achievement of the national commonwealth was postponed for ages till at length it was realised in England.

In the modern world the principle has been applied to a country as large as the United States. In course of time it was realised that its implications could not be squared with the maintenance of slavery, and slavery was abolished in America at a vast expenditure of lives and money. In countries like these has

developed a definite sense of duty to the world at large. We can easily imagine a Russian or German statesman using the arguments which Athens applied to Melos.<sup>2</sup> We cannot imagine a recognised British or American statesman daring to argue crudely that in international affairs the only criterion is the might of the stronger. In his own country public opinion would condemn him. A long experience of self-government on the national scale has raised the sense of duty in men to each other to a plane much higher than was ever reached in the cities of Greece. The national commonwealth has done much to promote the sense of duty in men to each other. But that growth must always be checked and remain within certain limits so long as our institutions reflect the principle that the duty we owe is owed to the people of our own race, or to those resident in a certain territory. Let us hold in mind the warning given by our own conduct after the war. The principle of the commonwealth was certainly at stake in the war, and we were its champions. None the less, the bitter experience of war, ending in absolute victory for ourselves, bred in our minds a passion for power which made us forget the principle for which we had fought. We and our Allies used our power to exact from Germany a promise to pay sums of money which she could not have paid had she tried her utmost.

In Germany defeat had an opposite effect. They perceived as the source of all their misfortunes the system of authority with military power as its idol, to which they had submitted. At last the people of Germany renounced the principle of government by divine right, and to the best of their ability adopted the principle of self-government. The Weimar Republic produced leaders like Ebert, Rathenau, Stresemann, Brüning, Braun and Severing who compare favourably with the von Bülow and Bethmann-Hollweds of the German Empire.

In their treatment of the Weimar Republic the dominant motive of all the victors was to exact reparations. The policy of France as expressed by Poincaré was to keep Germany as a beggared outcast from civilised nations. The policy had the effect of associating constitutional government in the German mind with the utmost extremes of poverty and national abasement. It rendered impossible the task in which the republican statesmen exhausted their efforts or gave their lives. It threw back a great part of the German people onto their traditional belief that power is the end and object of national life, an end for which it is worth sacrificing all the principles which make for freedom.

This policy defeated the particular objects at which it was aimed. A mere fraction of the money which the Germans were obliged to promise has, in fact, been collected. That fraction was enormously exceeded by the loss to the victors themselves, brought about by the derangements it involved in the system of international exchange. The disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles are to-day a dead letter. Universal conscription is again established in Germany. Her factories are working overtime to equip the whole nation with every conceivable kind of weapon. This menace to peace is everywhere checking the growth of trade and general prosperity. The war, fought and won to make the world safe for democracy, has led to a second birth of despotism, which now pervades Europe and Asia in a form more dangerous and extreme than before.

The alternative course would have been to regard the establishment of a system in Germany under which its government was really responsible to the people of Germany themselves as the major interest of the world at large. In order to do this it would have been necessary rapidly to revise the Treaty of Versailles. The victors would have had to forego their

claim to indemnities much sooner than they did. They must have disarmed or relaxed the disarmament clauses. Had their principal object been the establishment of the regime of responsible government in Germany itself, I can see no reason to doubt that that regime would be in existence to-day, and Germany would be sitting at the Council of the League. The people of Germany would have come to believe in that system as best for themselves. They would also have been given a sufficient experience in learning to work it. It is difficult to think that a policy directed to strengthening the Weimar Republic could have yielded dangers so great as those which a policy of keeping it shackled and weak have produced.

In the years which followed the war the statesmen who controlled the affairs of the victors would have described such a policy as wholly unpractical. Even in the light of after events I think they would say so still, and in one sense of the word 'practical' they would, I think, have been right. The public opinion of the peoples they govern would not allow them to do what in the interests of those people themselves was so obviously wise. The institutions of a national commonwealth, however great and however highly developed, do not suffice to reveal to its citizens the interests of human society as a whole. Nor can they clearly reveal to the people of one nation how inseparably its interests are bound up with those of human society as a whole. We are always trying to saddle the blame for whatever goes wrong on this person or that, or on whole bodies of persons. We argue as though the calamities of the world could all be avoided if only men could be better, and behave better than they do. In this we are right, but the major fact we so constantly overlook is this: in a world where even the best people cannot in fact do what is best there is something dangerously wrong

with the system under which they are trying to do their best. The defect, not only in statesmen, but in the great masses of people whose opinion determines the action of statesmen, is largely due to the system which moulds their minds. To preach good conduct is of little avail unless at the same time we alter the system to one which makes men see for themselves what goodness is and also inclines them to follow its dictates. Human nature cannot begin to realise its full possibilities until we have achieved a commonwealth which knows no limit but that of human society and renders all men obedient to laws common to all in things which affect them all. And when it is achieved the endless task will still remain of improving its quality.

I must not be thought to depreciate the efforts which statesmen are making to avert war, wherever the peace of the world is threatened. My argument is that their efforts will in the end fail and that human society will be engulfed in calamities worse than any yet known so long as prevention of war is sought as the goal of policy and crown of achievement. The tactical steps designed to prevent war should be conceived as means, but only one of the means, to be followed in the effort to attain human welfare. The wider policy needed to attain that end can only be conceived by men who have seen wherein human welfare consists, and do not shrink from saying what they have seen and what they seek. In the last analysis, a growth in the disposition of men to serve others than themselves, a constructive unselfishness, is the end to be sought. In so far as that one end is attained peace and all other blessings of life will ensue.

This threadbare platitude leads to the practical question to which I have ventured to suggest an answer which is far from threadbare. By what means is this virtue in human beings to be fostered, this final end of all human endeavour to be sought?

By each for himself in communion with God and his fellows, through churches and schools, and a great variety of institutions. But my answer is that the most potent of all these means will be the framework of society in which these various institutions are knit together. The virtue in human beings will grow in so far as that framework is designed to exercise and promote it. A state which disposes the minds of its members gathered in one locality to regard their duty to others as in any way limited to those who live in that area cannot develop their sense of duty in the highest degree. In a world divided into national states the growth of virtue in men, however developed in those states, must be arrested at a certain point. Wars and the miseries they bring in their train are a sure indication that in public affairs men have ignored the real end of human existence and have shrunk from the task of finding and applying the practical means of attaining that end.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Civitas Dei*, Vol. I. p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM THE NATIONAL TO THE INTER- NATIONAL COMMONWEALTH

Most people who speak our language believe that the principle of the commonwealth under which they live will spread to the world at large, that in course of time all nations will somehow or other acquire the art of self-government. They would see nothing fantastic in a forecast that sooner or later the world will be covered by national commonwealths. But if they are asked to conceive a world in which all these national states are incorporated in one commonwealth to which every human being in the last resort owes his allegiance, they feel at once that they are asked to enter the realms of fantasy. They think of the national commonwealth contained by one frontier or coast as the last word in human development. The idea of the national state imprisons their minds. They can no more conceive a genuine commonwealth of nations than a Greek in the time of Aristotle could conceive a national commonwealth which contained all the cities of Greece. This profound belief in the national commonwealth as the last word in political construction is a gulf in the minds of men which has to be bridged before we can move to a higher level of civilisation than that we have reached.

What steps can be taken to change this outlook? How shall men be convinced that a government of the world responsible in an ever-increasing degree to those who are governed is a practical project, which can be achieved if they have it in view? I refuse to consider any ideal as deserving the name,

unless I believe that it can and will be realised in practice. I must, therefore, endeavour to show how I think that a world commonwealth can be brought into being.

In discovering the practical steps to be taken our surest guide will be a grasp of the principle which unites a commonwealth and inspires it with life. If that principle is indeed an incipient instinct in men to act on motives which look to the good of others, and not to the satisfaction of their own needs and desires, we shall scarcely drift into thinking that a world commonwealth can be brought into being, at this stage at any rate, by anything in the shape of a world conference. The principle of the commonwealth is in being, but as yet far too weak and limited in scope to vitalise a world commonwealth and make it real. The national commonwealths which exist have strengthened their citizens' sense of devotion to each other, and have even helped to promote a habit of considering the interests of foreigners. Generally speaking, the feeling in commonwealths towards aliens is more generous than in authoritarian states. Yet, in every crisis this feeling is counteracted by the inexorable principle of national sovereignty. Whenever the interests of a commonwealth collide with those of another state, the claim of that commonwealth on its citizens to consider its interests and no others is usually paramount. This is one of the factors which make it so difficult for practical statesmen to think that the people they govern would ever consent to be merged in an international commonwealth.

Though I do not expect a system of government for the world to issue from a conference of statesmen appointed for the purpose by the national states of the world, I find myself able to picture, and at no very distant date, a federal commonwealth framed to include two or more of the national commonwealths

in which the practice of responsible government is best understood. The next step to the ultimate goal in view is a commonwealth of nations, an international commonwealth in the real sense of those words. By this I mean a commonwealth which includes nations recognised as separate one from another, with distinctive national governments of their own. But I also mean a commonwealth which is a state in the genuine sense of that term, one in which these self-governing nations are all included, with a government competent to control those issues which national commonwealths cannot control, the issues of peace and war and all that relates thereto. Such a government must be responsible, not to the national governments which the commonwealth includes, but to the people they represent. That is the crux of the whole matter.

If such an international commonwealth were realised, and maintained its existence for a few generations, a change would quickly take place in the minds of its citizens. Their sense of devotion to the commonwealth as a whole would grow as the sense of loyalty in American States grew to the national commonwealth in which they were merged. The idea that supreme devotion can be rendered by men to some unit which is wider and more scattered than a national state would be proved in practice. The real obstacle which is barring progress to a world commonwealth is this deeply rooted obsession that the ultimate devotion which inspires men in the mass to dedicate their wealth and their lives to each other cannot, in fact, be rendered to any unit that is not of the nature of a national state. The actual creation of an international unit to which such devotion is effectively rendered would cut this obsession at its root. Its visible existence would convince an ever-increasing number of people that a commonwealth inclusive of all nations, a government of man responsible to

man, is something more than a fantasy. In no great time the creation of a world commonwealth would come to be recognised by practical statesmen as the goal of all policy, the only structure of human society which can be regarded as finally based on realities. In international politics a principle of action would have been established to the test of which all policies could be brought.

The nations have moved forward and upwards to the brink of a canyon, and now stand in imminent danger of pushing each other into the chasm. The real chasm is in their minds. They cannot as yet conceive a loyalty of that kind which sustains a state and a government, other than a loyalty rendered to a national state. The realisation of one international state would be like a footbridge thrown over that canyon. If the bridge was a real one, however narrow, the nations would little by little find their way over it, to the infinite region beyond in which freedom, in the only complete sense of that word, can be realised.

It is needless to argue at any great length that a feat of political construction, more momentous and difficult even than that of the thirteen American States, must be the work of leaders who speak for nations in whose life the principle of the commonwealth is most fully expressed. There have been, and are in plenty, international states in the form of empires. The first international commonwealth must, from its nature, be the work of men who understand what the principle of the commonwealth means and how to apply it in practice. They must have acquired that knowledge in the government of national commonwealths, and be able to speak for the peoples they govern. These obvious remarks lead on to conclusions of vital importance. The task of releasing human affairs from the impasse to which they have come rests with those national states, and with the

leaders of those states in which the principle of the government of men by themselves has been carried to its furthest point. In using these last words I am holding in mind the principle that self-government is real only in so far as the government it provides is real. There may be in central America states where every citizen is entitled to vote on reaching the age of puberty. Such a right is no proof that the state has attained the quality of a commonwealth. There must also be enough of these voters who are willing, not only to obey the law, but even to see that all others obey it. The first international commonwealth must from its nature be founded by states which have laid the foundation of effective self-government for themselves. They must be those national commonwealths which have carried self-government to the highest point which has yet been attained.

It is difficult to exaggerate, therefore, the responsibility which rests on the people of such states and on their leaders at this stage in the history of man. The difficult task of building a bridge whereby the nations at large can escape the obsession of nationalism of necessity rests with those which have reached the highest state of development. Until that is achieved no further advance in civilisation which is worth counting as such can, I think, be made. Nay more, I believe, that so long as the principle of national sovereignty is treated as the last word in political construction our present civilisation is threatened with dangers other, though greater, than those which overwhelmed Graeco-Roman civilisation. The national commonwealths alone can break that obsession by creating a sovereignty that is international and also effective. I am clear in my own mind that sooner or later man in the vast aeons of time which we now know that he has before him on this planet will achieve a government for himself. I am equally clear that if the first conscious steps to that goal are

postponed for centuries, man is doomed in those centuries to pass through great tribulation. I do not believe that those sufferings are necessary. They can be prevented if steps to avoid them are taken in time.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

THE principles which must in the end govern the structure of human society can only be discovered and tested by creating such institutions as the limited nature of public opinion allows. It is only when they are brought into operation that public opinion can begin to see, and that slowly, how far they are failing to realise the ends for which they were founded, and why. The League of Nations was the first unconscious acknowledgment by practical statesmen that national states are not the last word in human development, that the peoples who obey them are in fact but integral parts of a higher unity. It has proved the immense utility of an international machinery, and also the limits of that utility. It has rendered notable service in restoring to solvency bankrupt governments, in combating traffic in noxious drugs and white slaves and in throwing a flood of light on world conditions. It brings together in one place representative men from most of the world, and creates personal relations between them which are full of hope for the future. But its greatest service has been in revealing its own limitations, in its failure to achieve the primary object for which its founders designed it—collective security, the prevention of war by compacts between sovereign states. It has thus forced us to face the supreme question whether the maintenance of peace can be treated as the ultimate goal of human endeavour, the guiding principle of public policy. Its very failure is forcing the world to think once more what is the end and object of life.

The events which led to this great experiment were described in the previous volume. The military empires of central Europe had set out to destroy the smaller states on their eastern and western frontiers which lay in the path of their wider ambitions. When their power was shattered and the victors assembled in Paris to reconstruct the fabric of Europe, public opinion had reacted in the opposite direction. The principle of sovereignty vested in national states was treated as final and sacred. The number of sovereign states into which Europe was divided was increased. It was seen that these numerous states must come into conflict at times, if they exercised their sovereign rights to the full. To avert this danger the states of the world were to covenant one with another never to press their sovereign rights to the point of war, or at any rate till they had tried all the methods of conciliation prescribed in the Covenant. Human society was thus to consist of a number of units, each and all of them organised on a principle different from that which governed their relations one with another. The national states existed in so far as the people who composed them were prepared to render a boundless devotion to the state as a whole. The claim of their governments to that boundless devotion was admitted. But these governments were to covenant one with another not to call on their subjects or citizens to enforce their will with arms on another state. They were also to covenant one with another to punish and coerce any member state which disregarded the compact.

The relation which combined people in states was a unilateral relation, the one-sided and absolute claim of the government to devotion, the one-sided and absolute duty of the subject to render it. The states were related to each other on the basis of compact, a bilateral and, indeed, multilateral relation.

We have now had time to see the result. While the unity and efficiency of the states, even of the states which did not exist before the war, has steadily increased, the relations of states to each other has sunk into ever-growing disorder. Never have men so hated the thought of war, for never before have so many of them known what it means. Yet never have men been less certain that they themselves may not live to see a war more widespread and terrible than the last.

We are now learning what national sovereignty means when carried to its practical conclusion in a highly mechanised world. Political thinkers are beginning to say, and almost to say with one voice, that the cause of civilisation is lost unless national states will agree to abandon some part of their sovereignty. Such remarks are becoming a common form in attempts to review the present state of human society. If sovereignty means anything it means the sole and exclusive claim of the state to command the obedience of its own citizens. How a government can abandon that sole and exclusive claim, without abandoning the claim to sovereignty itself, is seldom explained. If a government once concedes the right to the League of Nations to issue commands to its own subjects over its head it has merged its sovereignty in the League of Nations and is sovereign no longer.

Some thinkers, and even some statesmen who see where the principle of national sovereignty is leading, have suggested practical steps for restricting it. They urge that the League of Nations must have a 'police' of its own, a fleet, an army and an air force strong enough to enforce the Covenant on any recalcitrant member, just as a national government has police to enforce its law on rebellious citizens. But they shrink from stating the necessary consequence of their proposal. A League police must be recruited

from subjects who owe allegiance to states which compose the League, from most if not all of them. Its members must all be pledged to obey, if necessary by giving their lives, the League of Nations, not the government of the national state to which they belong, if the two are at odds. The unlimited devotion of these men at any rate must be transferred from their national states to the League.

To have any effect such a force must be on a scale commensurate at least with any one of the national forces. Its cost will be comparable to that which the larger nations spend on their armaments. The League of Nations will require a budget comparable to that of one of the leading Powers.

At present its expenses are confined to the maintenance of its clerical staff at Geneva, the cost of commissions and incidental expenses. The League budget is smaller than those of many of the leading counties and towns in England. It is raised by voluntary contributions of the member states levied on the basis of an agreed assessment. A certain number of these states are in default, and the League budget is balanced by levying from all the others enough money to meet the deficits caused thereby. Though the burden on the wealthier states is slight, a constant pressure is exercised by their governments on the League secretariat to reduce its expenses. If instead of raising one or two millions a year the League had to raise a hundred millions or so to pay, equip and maintain an effective force of its own, a larger number of governments than at present would certainly fail to meet the demands levied upon them. The much heavier burden imposed on the states members who met the demands made on the budgets would be increased. The whole system would collapse for exactly the same reason that the financial system of the American Confederation collapsed after the War of Secession. The only effective remedy

would be that applied in the present constitution of the United States. The League would have to be given power to go over the heads of the governments of the states and raise the revenues it needed by taxing their subjects, where necessary by distraint. To vest in the League power to levy and collect taxes from the subjects of sovereign states is to destroy their sovereignty, and at the same time to change its character from that of a league to that of an international state in the full sense of the term—a state with a government and a sovereignty of its own. Yet the fact remains that no one who has urged the creation of an international police on any effective scale has dared to suggest or, indeed, seen that the thing cannot be done, unless the League is given the constitution and powers of an international state.

The reason why they have not faced the necessary means to the end they urge is that they know full well in their hearts that the nations are not ready to take those means—not one of them is ready. And they are not ready because the system of national states, under which their peoples are born and bred, creates in the minds of those who grow up in them a sense that their ultimate duty is due to their national state, and not to the League to which that state is bound by the Covenant. So it was that America rejected the Covenant which her own president had fathered on the world. So it was that Manchuria and Abyssinia were led to their fate.

Take up this mangled matter at the best;  
Men do their broken weapons rather use  
Than their bare hands.<sup>1</sup>

I do not think that a league of sovereign states can ever ensure the world against war. I am sure, none the less, that a league which made no pretensions to powers which only a sovereign state can wield, can diminish the risks of war. In the heat of the Abys-

sinian crisis the Archbishop of York declared that it may "be necessary to have another great and horrible war to establish the efficacy of the League of Nations".<sup>2</sup> That earnest supporter of the League, Lord Grey, was perhaps a safer guide when he said, "I do not like the idea of resorting to war to prevent war". He had also said that without America the League would at best become "but a revived concert of the Great Powers of Europe, liable at any time to split into rival groups". In the light of Grey's words let us read once more those Articles of the Covenant which lured Abyssinia to her doom:

#### ARTICLE 10

The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

#### ARTICLE 16

Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.

The Members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimise the loss and inconvenience resulting from

the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.

Any Member of the League which has violated any covenant of the League may be declared to be no longer a Member of the League by a vote of the Council concurred in by the Representatives of all the other Members of the League represented thereon.

It was these Articles which led the United States to reject the Covenant, and thus to cripple the League from its birth. We are now faced by the fact that not one but all the states which signed the Covenant have broken their pledge in the letter as well as the spirit. These pledges are dead. No miracle can restore them to life. They are corpses hung round the necks of the nations that signed them and broke them, poisoning the life of the world and destroying the benefits to be gained from a league of nations in the true sense of that word, of a league, that is, which does not pretend to the attributes of a state. The only effective cure is to cut them away by a frank acknowledgment made in the light of bitter experience that in signing them we all made a mistake.

The League has failed in its primary duty of revising treaties made in the fevered temper which always follows a great war. I see no hope that the League can revise its own Covenant and am, therefore, forced to say what I think my own country should do, to deal with this mischievous situation.

I suggest that our first step should be to discuss with the other British Dominions the question how to establish a league of nations based on pledges which practical experience allows us to think can be kept. We have seen that nations are willing and able to send their leaders to one centre to discuss the

affairs of the world in public as well as in private. Such discussion fosters the growth of a world opinion as opposed to merely national opinions. Experience has also shown that the nations are prepared to support an international secretariat as the necessary instrument of such discussion. We should also urge that a new covenant should omit pledges like those in Articles 10 and 16 which every member of the League has signally failed to discharge. As the Covenant stands Ireland, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand are all solemnly pledged in terms to preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity of Finland and Russia, of every state in western Europe but Germany, of almost every republic in Central and South America. To leave standing on paper a pledge which in fact lured Abyssinia to its fate, is to leave false coin in circulation, which debases the value of international credit. I feel little doubt that if we ourselves faced this position, the other British Dominions would face it with us.

I have no faith that the states now included in the League could ever succeed in framing a new covenant. They are too many in number and too diverse in their outlook. Such a change could only be effected in practice by a British initiative taken outside the League. I think that the British democracies would have to announce that at some future time they would give formal notice of leaving the League and at the same time invite the leading Powers, whose action in fact determines the peace of the world, to discuss the terms of a new covenant based, so far as possible, on the old, but omitting all pledges which experience has shown to be waste-paper. The declared intention of all the British communities to leave the existing League would in fact end its existence. The new league could then adopt at Geneva everything worth preserving. All the members of

the old League would, I believe, in time adhere to the new league and take part in its counsels. I think that powerful states which hold aloof because they cannot subscribe to the pledges implied in such Articles as 10 and 16 would reconsider their position in a league freed from such pledges.

I do not suggest that a league, however reformed, will finally exorcise the danger of war. But I do believe that a league freed from automatic commitments would begin to prove a valuable instrument of peaceful diplomacy for revising obsolete treaties, and for bringing to light situations which, unless treated in time, drive nations to fight with each other. It would serve to remind the world of its growing unity, of its need for a government and international law in the real sense of those words. It would help men to realise that war is the product of anarchy and that anarchy is inseparable from a world cut up into sovereign states.

Though I think that a league of nations based on realities can do much to reduce the risks of war, I do not foresee any process whereby it can be moulded little by little into a genuine government of the world. Yet I have not shrunk, and I do not shrink, from upholding the creation of a world commonwealth, of a genuine government of mankind, as the practical goal of human endeavour. I believe that, unless conscious and effective steps are taken towards that goal, the level of civilisation we have now reached cannot be maintained. It is even in danger of falling in ruins, as it fell in the Dark Ages. But the project of a world government is not in sight till two or more commonwealths, more advanced than the rest, have recognised these truths, and by some immense spiritual effort have consciously merged their sovereignties in one international commonwealth. In order to do this they must create one government more competent than their separate

governments to control the relations of the people it represents to the rest of mankind. That government must handle the issues of peace and war, and must have the forces necessary for that purpose. It must, therefore, have power to tax not the national states which compose it, but the citizens of those states. It must draw its authority to levy these taxes from the citizens themselves and not from their national governments.

Such an international state will not be established merely by the framing and acceptance of a federal constitution designed to accomplish these objects. It must prove its reality and efficacy to itself and the world. But if such a commonwealth were established and survived for some generations, the spirit which gave it reality would grow, as the spirit which now makes the United States the strongest national commonwealth in the world has grown. The transference of American loyalty from the state to the Union was a gradual process. Having adopted the constitution, they elected their president and members to Congress, they obeyed its laws and paid its taxes. All unconsciously as years went by they came to think of the Union rather than the State as the unit for which they were called on to live and to die. They awoke to the fact that the larger loyalty had raised their life to a higher plane, which was not consistent with slavery in their midst. In the end the great majority were found willing to devote their property and their lives to destroying slavery for the sake of the Union.

And so it will be with the first international commonwealth which survives for one or two generations. It will silently draw to itself the devotion of the peoples who agree to form it. They will recognise in time, and the world outside them will recognise, that their national life has not been impaired by the transfer of sovereignty to a larger unit, but has, in fact, been raised to a higher plane. The possibility of

an international state composed of nations separated by oceans will have been demonstrated to the world. The gulf which at present exists in men's minds will have been bridged.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act I, Scene 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, vol. ii. p. 66.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLITICAL THOUGHT AND THE CHURCHES

THE previous chapters have led to the view of human society, divided into national states under no general direction, as checked in its onward and upward march by reaching the edge of a chasm, into which they must force each other unless the chasm is bridged in time. We have reached the further conclusion that the task of constructing a bridge whereby this dangerous chasm can be passed must from the nature of the problem rest with those national states which have reached a higher stage of political development than the rest, those which have best succeeded in applying the principle of the commonwealth to their own institutions. If so, the responsibility for (1) clear thinking, (2) readiness to act, and (3) decisive action, which rests on such national commonwealths, is great beyond measure.

I am trying to use the idea of responsibility in its strictest sense. Obligation is conditioned by power. Men are only responsible for doing what they are able to do. I have, therefore, put the responsibility for decisive action last. Matters have not reached that stage when leaders of national commonwealths, their representative statesmen, are able to act. There is not in the people they represent that public opinion which enables them to act. Their primary function is to express public opinion in action. They can guide public opinion in detail. But in larger matters of policy they cannot create public opinion, if only because the nature of their task denies them the time and also the detachment required for the thinking necessary to see what the wider issues are.

And this is especially true of the public opinion which is needed at great junctures in history to lift human affairs from one plane to another. The kind of thinking which Adam Smith did cannot be done by a minister who has to direct a public department, to control a parliament and to fight elections.

The public opinion which is needed to lift the course of human affairs to a higher plane must from its nature be religious in the truest sense of that word. It is for that reason that churches play an indispensable part in such movements. The abolition of slavery is a typical case in point. That negro slavery was incompatible with the relations of man to God and of men to each other, as expounded by Jesus Christ, became clear to most thoughtful Christians whose minds were not obscured by the fact that they owned slaves, or belonged to a slave-owning community. The public opinion which enabled statesmen to abolish the institution of slavery was created by Quakers and the Evangelical movement.

The abolition of slavery was a simple case, because all that was necessary at the moment was to abolish a definite institution regardless of cost, to forbid a particular practice. As Professor Huxley once said: "Before we can do right we must first know what it is right to do". In this negative case of slavery, the churches had no difficulty in knowing what was right. For them to create the opinion on which statesmen could act was merely a question of time and persistence.

The churches are now appealing to statesmen to abolish war. In doing so they voice an overwhelming mass of public opinion outside their ranks as well as within them. And statesmen have tried to respond. The League and the Kellogg Pact are among the results.

If the reasoning advanced in these pages is sound,

and naturally I think it is, to abolish war by a simple act such as was needed to abolish slavery is not possible. My contention is that war is not the essential evil, the real impediment which arrests the advance of civilisation. It is merely a symptom of a far more inveterate evil which can only be cured by definite and difficult acts of construction. To work out what those acts of construction should be is beyond the province and also the capacity of churches. In the case of slavery no great effort of mental construction was needed to guide the churches such as Adam Smith applied to another field of human activity. In this case, where national sovereignty is threatening to stifle human progress, some clearer and harder thinking must be done before those who create public opinion can know how to create it.

It is for this reason that I urge that clear thinking, readiness to act, and decisive action in the leading commonwealths is required to release human society from the deadlock in which it is fixed. The order in which I have put the crucial words is deliberate. I do not believe that the leading statesmen in the leading commonwealths can begin to release human affairs from their present impasse until bodies like churches have created the public opinion upon which they can act. But I do not think that churches can of themselves see how to create an effective and constructive public opinion until they are given some sound and definite idea of the kind of change which must be made in the social structure before men can rise to a higher level of civilisation. In the League of Nations the churches have felt that they had been furnished with such a constructive plan. They have done their best to strengthen the hands of statesmen in making full use of it. The immense volume of public opinion, in countries where government is responsible to public opinion, which

supports the League is largely the result of their efforts.

In the light of actual experience can it still be argued that civilisation and its further progress can be maintained by virtue of a system based on no other foundation than compacts between national sovereignties? That question, I submit, has not as yet received the attention it deserves from political thinkers. By political thinkers I mean those who are free to see, think and declare what they feel to be true without regard to the effect that what they say may have on political programmes and parties. The life of such men centres for the most part, though not entirely, in universities. The circles of which I am thinking may be broadly described as academic.

The League of Nations was to a great extent the result of thought which came from those circles. To an overwhelming degree the influence of those circles has been used since the war to support and create the belief that human society must and can be stabilised on the basis of the Covenant.

I am forced to ask myself why is this so? I am not myself a trained political thinker. My walk in life has been mainly that of a political journeyman. As a young man I had to construct municipal institutions. In South Africa, India and Ireland I have been concerned with the structure of national governments. The mechanical necessities of these tasks have forced me once and again to consider what is the basic principle which unites a society in such manner as to render its members amenable to the rule of law. I have had to ask myself what law in the real sense of that term is. To these questions I have always found myself driven to the same answer, that the only factor that binds men together in the last analysis is a sense of duty one to another. I have also seen that where men are so bound together in

organic unity their sense of duty deepens and grows with surprising rapidity. I have seen this happen in a town like Johannesburg. I have watched attempts to stabilise society in South Africa by elaborate compacts between its various governments and seen them break down in every direction. I have seen the opposite principle tried of establishing a government which could claim the unlimited devotion of all South Africans. In twenty-five years I have seen a growth in readiness to respond to that claim, greater than I hoped in the time, sufficient to offer assurance that the Union of South Africa is now established on lasting foundations. Since the Great War I have watched attempts to stabilise human society by virtue of compacts between its national states; and yet we see that the structure of human society is more precarious than ever it was before in time of peace. Even the system of international trade and finance as established before the war is being reduced to a system of barter between individual nations. The sense of uncertainty is affecting the life of every country, of every town, of every village community. The activities of men in their normal pursuits are so paralysed thereby that they are unable to exercise the power they have to produce and exchange the goods men need to support civilised life. Again I am driven to believe that this final attempt to relate national states to each other on a basis of compact is doomed to failure. I can see no hope for the future unless or until some conscious effort is made to unite human society on the basis of the infinite claim of society to unlimited devotion from each of its members.

I can only recall one political thinker of recognised authority, Benedetto Croce, who has clearly and firmly stated this view. I am, therefore, driven to ask myself why a view, which seems to my mind a truth of supreme importance, receives no support

in intellectual circles, or, to speak more bluntly, why those circles provide no effective guidance for churches and practical statesmen.

The reasons, I think, are twofold. In the last century a professor of pure mathematics at Cambridge was wont to denounce applied mathematics as a degradation of the subject he taught. Universities, like every profession in life, are exposed to the subtle disease of professionalism. When doctors, clergy, soldiers or the members of any calling come to regard it as an end in itself and lose sight of the end for which it exists they injure their profession and their own value as professional men. The ultimate problem for all of us in our lives is how to act. Our thought is a guide to action—a means. As Carlyle has said, the end of life is not a thought but an act. A branch of knowledge pursued as an end in itself will lose its quality as a branch of knowledge. And this is pre-eminently true of political science. I have known a teacher of political science in a great university to argue that political theory, as he understood it, could have no relation to political practice. He expressly rejected the notion that political theory could ever be expected to afford any guidance to statesmen engaged upon practical politics. This explains, I think, why men experienced in public affairs, when they read the works of political theorists, find much that seems to have no relation whatever to facts of life they have handled. They are often expressed in a jargon which seems to have lost all touch with realities. I strongly suspect the value of every political theory which cannot in the end be grasped and applied by practical statesmen.

I have often been criticised on the ground that I treat human affairs as if they were subject to laws as binding as those which govern physical machinery. Spiritual facts cannot be weighed and measured with the same, or nearly the same, exactitude as

physical facts. The element of free will, in which I profoundly believe, is one reason why principles cannot be applied in the sphere of human action with anything like the certainty and precision with which they are applied to physical nature. But are we then to say that human relations are not governed by principles in the long run? If not, is political science a genuine science at all? I firmly believe that it is, because I believe that by patient, intelligent and fearless study of fact, principles of life can be discerned. By observing those principles the lives of men can be raised to a higher plane; by ignoring them human affairs may be plunged in disaster. I believe that Milton was right when he spoke of truths "for the want of which whole nations fare the worse."<sup>1</sup> It is those truths that political thinkers should seek, and when they have found them, express in terms which those whose business it is to apply them can grasp. Political science is not merely a genuine science, but at this juncture of human affairs the most important of all the sciences. It is one which calls for the service of the best and most powerful minds. The task of helping the world across the gulf which arrests its progress lies in the first instance with political thinkers of recognised authority and not with statesmen or churches.

It is to the judgment of such thinkers that I venture to submit the propositions advanced in this book, and also the practical conclusions drawn from them. Can human beings ever be united in any lasting and permanent manner, except by virtue of a sense of duty, by an instinct which prompts them to put the interests of others before their own? Without such a sense of duty can compacts serve to unite them? Are states not bodies of men bound together by the principle that each member of the state owes an unlimited duty to all the others? Does not this principle mean the existence of a government in the

state which claims an unlimited obedience from all its subjects? Is not the subject morally bound to render that obedience, except in the case where he feels that his government is so mistaken that to do so will work irreparable mischief to the state? I am here thinking of a case such as Socrates faced, and Christians are now facing in Germany, where the government forbids the citizen to utter what he thinks are truths "for the want of which whole nations fare the worse". This proposition means that there can be no right of rebellion; but there may be, and sometimes is, a duty to rebel. Must not the right of the government to this normal obedience mean that the government may call on the citizen to use force to impose its laws upon those who resist them? Could law, in fact, operate unless governments made this claim, and unless it were obeyed by its citizens? Can law in this sense of the word, therefore, exist outside the limits of a state? Is not international law, so called, something essentially different from the law which prevails in states? If the duty men owe to each other is the essential bond which unites states, should their governments not be rendered responsible to those of its citizens who have realised the sense of public duty to an adequate degree?

And now we come to questions the answers to which depend more on the reading of facts. Where a government is made in some genuine manner responsible to its citizens, and yet retains its reality as a government, does not their sense of duty to the state tend to increase? Is not the strongest sense of patriotism as a matter of fact produced in the most highly developed commonwealths? Is not the end and object of the state to increase this sense of duty in men to each other? Is not the state in the form of the commonwealth the most effective agency for developing this sense of duty in men in the mass? On the other hand, can a state limited to one section of human

beings, and organised on the basis of the infinite duty of all its members to that section alone, fully develop their sense of duty to human beings outside that section? Must not national commonwealths—even in their most highly developed form—create a disposition in most of their citizens to regard their national interests as prior to the interests of society at large? Can the relations of groups of people each regarding their interests as primary be stabilised on the basis of compacts between their governments? Can a system of compacts between sovereign states from its nature be trusted to restrain them from using force against each other? Can the rule of law between nations ever be established on a basis of compact? Can a league of nations, however valuable as a stage in progress, and however highly developed as a contractual system, ever afford to human society the stability it needs? Can the state fulfil its essential function of increasing the sense of duty in men to each other, in the form of the merely national state? Can the sense of duty in men to each other be developed to its utmost capacity until they are organised in one state, subject to one law, in such manner that they are led to feel that their ultimate duty is owed to the human race as a whole, and not to one part of it? Have men any prospect of attaining a higher plane of civilisation than that reached, so long as they are organised under national sovereignties?

And now I come to questions which require some historical sense and experience of men in those who answer them. Can the national states of the world, even if all of them were commonwealths, ever be transformed by one act into a world state, so that all men owe their allegiance, in the last analysis, to a single sovereignty? Is it not in the nature of things that two or more, and those the most advanced commonwealths, would have to make a beginning by

merging themselves into one international sovereignty?

If a world commonwealth is to be realised, must it not be by a gradual process, one national state after another deciding to merge its sovereignty in an international state which has come into being?

For the purpose I have in view, this long series of questions can, I think, be summarised in two. Can the progress of civilisation continue beyond the level it has now reached, or indeed maintain that level, unless or until the ultimate allegiance of all human beings is rendered to one sovereignty?

The second is a more practical question, though of equal importance.

Is the realisation of a world commonwealth conceivable unless or until two or more national commonwealths have succeeded in merging their national sovereignties into one international sovereignty?

I venture to submit these two questions to those thinkers who regard political theory as a necessary guide to political practice.

Clear unequivocal answers are too seldom given by political thinkers to questions like these. The reason, I think, is that their minds are influenced more than they realise by the attitude of mind from which practical statesmen can rarely escape. In the academic circles, to which I appeal, my first question, at any rate, would, I think, be dismissed as too academic to be worth considering. The idea of a world commonwealth would be treated as one which no body of people large enough to affect practical issues would consider. As to this I agree; but the willingness of men to take this or that particular step is, I submit, a question for the politician and not for political thinkers. The question, an opinion on which I am asking from trained and disciplined thinkers, is this. So long as people refuse all final allegiance to a sovereignty wider than national sovereignties, can

they hope to rise to a higher plane of civilisation? Can a system of compact between these sovereignties, however developed, act as a real preventive of war and establish the rule of law between these sovereignties?

I believe that a clear pronouncement from intellectual circles on these questions would open the way for work which neither political thinkers nor politicians can do, which only churches and bodies like churches can do. At present the churches believe and preach that the evils inherent in national sovereignty can be cured by the League of Nations, on the principles embodied in the Covenant between those sovereignties. And in preaching this gospel they feel they are justified by the general teaching of political thinkers. But picture for a moment another situation. Suppose that a number of recognised and authoritative political thinkers were to teach that the League of Nations is at best no more than a palliative, so long as the principle of national sovereignty is assumed to be final, that no compact between governments can establish the rule of international law in the absolute sense of that word, that the first and essential step to be taken towards the establishment of international law is for two or more national commonwealths to establish one international sovereignty between themselves, the churches would then be able to begin the work which they only can do. If in national commonwealths churches were led to believe that the first duty of citizens in those commonwealths was not merely to support the Covenant, but to merge their own sovereignties in some wider international sovereignty, and that commonwealths by doing so would open to men a vista of hope which could in the course of time be realised, the hope of a structure of society based on realities, of a world ordered in accordance with the laws of God, then public opinion which would make such a change possible would slowly but surely

come into being. The change that is needed is first and foremost a change in men's minds. The work of effecting that change is essentially work for the churches; but they cannot begin it till political thinkers have clearly said what the change should be. When once that change is effected the work of the practical statesmen begins. The materials upon which they can work have at last been prepared and brought to their hands.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Milton, *Areopagitica*, p. 35, edited by Edwin Arber. Constable & Co. Ltd., 1903.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

As I write these pages the President of the British Association meeting at Norwich repeats the message of science to this generation. He foretells that our race has before it in this planet aeons of time; perhaps as long as those that covered the whole development of life in the past—that is to say, millions of years. As I read his words I feel joyfully sure that men will achieve a government of the world responsible to themselves before the first of those millions is passed, within centuries fewer than those since man became man. The human race is still in its early youth. I hold to this faith that through such a commonwealth the sons of men will one day rise to levels of virtue and happiness higher than those which seers and poets have figured in dreams of the Golden Age. A time will come when God, beholding his children on earth, will say: “These are they which came out of great tribulation.”<sup>1</sup>

After tracing the growth of civilisation through the centuries which have passed since men learned how to record their doings this is the faith left in my mind. The stupendous advance achieved during that period has been the result of effort and thought, which became highly creative when men were able to read and criticise what others had thought before them, and also to compare what they were doing with what others had done. We have seen how great innovations in the outlook and structure of society were made in Palestine, Greece and England by communities which cannot have looked very important to their powerful neighbours at the time. We

have also noticed periods when the progress of civilisation was delayed for centuries, because no one appeared at that time who was able to read the meaning of what had been done and also apply what they had read. I believe that the whole world would be other and better than it now is had the people of Athens seen how to apply the principles which inspired their commonwealth to the empire they created. The same, I think, may be said, if British policy in America had followed the counsels of Burke rather than those of Lord North.

In the second volume we saw how civilisation was raised to the plane it has now reached by the organisation of commonwealths on the national scale. In this volume I argue that it cannot now rise to a higher plane and may indeed decline, until men are able to realise a commonwealth on the international scale. But it does not follow that the high initiative needed to effect such a change can come from one of the major commonwealths. In the light of the past it may prove to lie with those which are relatively small and remote. The fable of Aesop, which tells how the lion caught in a net was released by the mouse, is a parable true of history.

I have argued that the first and critical step towards the realisation of an international commonwealth must be taken by two or more states which have carried the principle of the national commonwealth to its furthest expression: the fewer the easier. It would not matter how small the number might be, if the result was a genuine international commonwealth. Clearly this step would be least difficult for national commonwealths with a common language, with similar constitutions, whose security already depends on each other. I cannot, therefore, avoid the conclusion, to which the reasoning followed in these pages has led, that in the world as now ordered, either Australia, New Zealand, or both together

with Great Britain are the countries best able to construct the first foot-bridge across the gulf in men's minds which now prevents the world from passing from the national to the international commonwealth. But of this I am sure: the initiative would have to come from Australia or New Zealand. I cannot resist the conclusion that one or other of these minor commonwealths holds, though it does not know it, a key to the door which, until it is opened, imprisons the whole of mankind.

In saying this I am well aware that my readers will feel that I here enter the region of fantasy. It is just that feeling which attests the gulf in men's minds to which I am always referring. I will ask them, therefore, for once to give their fancy free rein, and to picture to themselves a federal union in which the Australian, New Zealand and British peoples had agreed to create a federal government for the purpose of controlling the relations of those countries to each other, and to the rest of the world. Such a government would have to include a legislature as well as an executive, a legislature empowered to impose and collect from the tax-payers the revenues required to enable the executive to discharge the international functions imposed on it.

In the past such proposals have always been met by arguments crystallised in Burke's aphorism, "*Natura obstat*"—geography stands in the way. To the League of Nations we owe it that this can no longer be said. If the Council and Assembly of the League can meet at one centre to transact business, in spite of all linguistic difficulties, there is no insuperable difficulty in two or more states which use the same language creating, so far as geography is concerned, an executive and legislature in one centre, with a secretariat like that of the League. The League was able to do this, and did it, because it renounced all claim to authority over the people

who composed its constituent states. It treated the national sovereignties as final. It claimed no allegiance from individuals. This brings us back to the point that the real difficulty in creating an international commonwealth exists, not in the facts of nature, but only in the state of men's minds.

We are giving the rein to our fancy so far as to suppose that this difficulty has been surmounted by national commonwealths speaking the same language. We must also assume that the constitutional problems involved have been solved, that some distribution of voting power and the burden of taxation has been reached which the smaller nations have been willing to adopt. If all this happened, and the peoples in these widely separated countries recorded their votes and paid their taxes for two generations, certain results would, I think, be found to have followed. In the first place, the national governments in these three countries would have found themselves far better able to discharge the functions imposed on them, merely by reason of the greater security they enjoyed. In the second place, the sense of devotion in the minds of the people themselves to the federal authority would have grown, as it grew in the course of a few generations in America. If such an international state were created and continued to exist for two generations, any movement to disrupt it would be crushed by public opinion in the country in which that movement arose. The spiritual factor required to bind an international commonwealth in an indissoluble union would have come into being.

The United States was conceived as the nucleus of a commonwealth destined to include states other than those who founded it. "New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union" were words written into the constitution. The terms of admission were wisely left to be settled whenever the occasion should arise. Here is a precedent to be

followed wherever the first international commonwealth is called into being. It must from the nature of the case be founded as the nucleus of something destined to grow, as a state always ready to consider the inclusion of other states which from time to time may desire to join it. But no state should ever be admitted on terms which would tend to destroy its character as an international commonwealth.

A proposal to unite in one international commonwealth communities living on opposite sides of the globe, the commonwealths most remote from each other, as the first step to uniting all the peoples who inhabit this globe may seem paradoxical. But the very distance between them creates one of the major interests common to both. Their supreme interest in common consists in protecting the principle of freedom for which they stand. But inseparably connected with this is the heavy task of protecting the routes which connect them by sea and by air. Such an international commonwealth as I ask the reader to imagine would find its first material interest in safeguarding the routes on the maintenance of which its continued existence must always depend; the routes through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

I am holding in mind that other countries are vitally concerned in the maintenance of these routes, more especially Egypt and India. In course of time the millions of India will learn to govern themselves, but I also think they will only do this by a long and painful experience. It is easy to conceive, on the other hand, that the statesmen of India or Egypt might seek to enter an international commonwealth which controlled the route which connects the eastern and western hemispheres long before they have reached the stage of self-government which countries like England, Australia or New Zealand have attained. I can also conceive their accepting admis-

sion on terms which would not endanger the stability of the international commonwealth we are picturing, and which would not destroy its character as such. And if this were found possible, a step would have been taken towards the ultimate goal of incomparable value. A real international commonwealth in being, which included countries like India and Egypt, as well as countries like England, Australia and New Zealand, would once for all establish the idea of a world commonwealth including all nations and kindreds and peoples as the practical goal of human affairs. The impulse of other nations to join it would be greatly increased.

There are states in Europe as directly interested in the route from the west to east as India, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand or England herself. I am thinking of a country like Holland, and in a lesser degree Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland. I can scarcely conceive statesmen from all these countries with their various languages meeting in convention with those of England, Australia and New Zealand to found a new international commonwealth which would, among other functions, control the routes which connect the western and eastern hemispheres. But if England, Australia and New Zealand had once established a stable commonwealth which controlled that route, with or without the inclusion of India and Egypt, I can well conceive that Holland might wish to enter that commonwealth. I can also conceive her being admitted. And if something of this kind should happen, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries would quickly follow. That diversity of language would offer no insuperable obstacle has already been proved by the League of Nations. If, in spite of language difficulties, these nations can now transact their business in the Council and Assembly of Geneva, so could the business of a commonwealth be transacted in a polyglot cabinet.

and parliament. The inclusion of powers like France would then be in sight.

If an international commonwealth built from countries within the British Empire came to include countries in Europe which had never been part of that Empire, the most difficult stage in its growth to a world commonwealth, after its first foundation, would have been crossed. So the British Empire would have done its work and passed into history.

And, putting both Constitutions together, you will say that it was not the *Romans* that spred upon the *World*; But it was the *World*, that spred upon the *Romans*: And that was the sure Way of Greatnesse.<sup>2</sup>

When the British Commonwealth had been transformed into something which, beyond dispute, was an international commonwealth, the time would at last be in sight when the United States would become an integral part of it. I think that before this would happen South Africa, Ireland and Canada would have found their way into the international commonwealth. In doing so, Ireland might solve the problem of her own national unity. It may well happen that Canada may prove the bridge whereby the people of America may pass from national isolation to partnership in a world commonwealth. Whenever that happens the peace of the world will be finally secured. The more difficult nations would then be eager to join it, and the world commonwealth will be more than strong enough to contain and to mould them.

I think, too, that long before this had happened the countries which had merged their sovereignties in an international commonwealth would also have transferred their control of backward peoples to the government of that commonwealth. I can think of it controlling the natives of Africa, New Guinea and Java with a policy consciously directed towards fitting these peoples to govern themselves and to join

in the government of the commonwealth as a whole.

Before a commonwealth had moved very far on the lines here rapidly sketched the danger of world wars would have become a thing of the past. Human society would have recovered at least the degree of stability reached in the nineteenth century, that transitory interval in which one national commonwealth was strong enough to control and police the maritime routes of the world. The world will never again see such control of the air as well as the sea by one national commonwealth. It may go through the terrible experience of seeing for a time such control exercised by a military despotism. But control by a despotism can have no permanence. The world will never again know the degree of stability it felt from 1815 to 1914 till some international commonwealth controls the main avenues through which the continents of the world have commerce with each other.

It is needless to develop this theme further. If a commonwealth such as I have here imagined had come into being, its gradual extension to include all the peoples of the world would be merely a question of time. Its influence would greatly accelerate the process whereby the peoples of Asia and Africa are learning to grasp and apply the principle of the commonwealth to their own institutions.

All this, of course, seems very remote; but it brings me back to the point with which I opened this chapter. We are now overshadowed by a sense of impending calamities which, if they befell, might plunge us back into centuries darker than those that followed the fall of ancient civilisation in Europe. I believe that these dangers are inherent in a world united by mechanisation, but divided into sovereign states, and can only begin to abate when men have learned to pass from the national to the international commonwealth. The most careful analysis I can make

of this situation has led me to think that the peoples best able to set such a change in motion are the two minor commonwealths isolated in the southern hemisphere. I am bound to say where my argument has led me, however strange the conclusion may seem; for, should it perchance be a sound conclusion, Australia and New Zealand, either or both, have at this juncture of history an opportunity of serving human society which cannot be measured by their present size or position in the world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Revelation vii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Bacon, *Of the True Greatnesse of Kingdoms and Estates.*

## CHAPTER XI

### DOMINION STATUS

IN the last chapter I have argued that the first international commonwealth in the real sense of that word must spring from the federal union of two or more nations versed in the art of self-government. This view is, I think, likely to meet with wider assent than some others advanced in these pages. Those who agree with it will, I believe, also agree that if any such step is possible at all in the course of the next century, it could only be taken by peoples included in the so-called British Commonwealth of Nations. That none of these nations, not even New Zealand, would at the present moment consider such a step is a fact that I face. And because I face it I must seek to explain it.

For the purpose of the argument I have throughout the previous pages spoken as though the Dominions were national commonwealths in the full sense of that word. Everyone knows that a vast majority of people in Ireland, in Canada, in South Africa, in Australia and even in New Zealand mean to develop as nations distinct from that in Great Britain. It is true that nearly everything has now been done which can be done by printing words upon paper to make them so. Step by step the position was established that the only law which governed them was the law they made through their own parliaments responsible to themselves. The end of this process has now been reached. By the Statute of Westminster the British parliament renounced its power to enact legislation which bound the Dominions, except on their own invitation. Of equal importance is

the manner in which the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the authority from which there is no appeal, has interpreted the Act.

But has the Statute of Westminster and the subsequent ruling of the Privy Council really completed the status of the self-governing Dominions as national commonwealths? Let me put that question in another way. Is the status which these countries have now acquired such as to induce the attitude of mind in their peoples that the status of countries like the United States, Switzerland, Holland or France produces in the minds of their citizens? Can this ever be so until their governments have as openly and explicitly accepted the final responsibility for peace or war? The principle is now firmly established and recognised that a self-governing Dominion is not committed to sending one soldier to fight or to spending one pound or dollar on a war in which Great Britain is engaged except by consent of its own parliament. Yet while that position is fully accepted the question still remains unanswered whether, if Great Britain is involved in a war which threatens the peace of the world, the Dominions are also involved as belligerents.

To reverse this one-sided question may clear the issue. Is Great Britain committed to war if one of the Dominions is involved in a war which threatens the peace of the world? The question put in this way is at once felt to be academic, a question somewhat remote from the sphere of realities, or even a logical catch: for the only government in the British Empire which is paying serious attention to the task of preventing a world war is that of Great Britain. The Dominion peoples know it and feel it, and that knowledge and feeling unconsciously affects their habits of mind. The people of Great Britain are acutely aware that the slightest error of judgment on the part of their government may involve themselves

and the whole world in a conflagration. In Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa the people have no such feeling in respect of their own governments.

I feel no doubt in my own mind that if Great Britain is again involved in a world war, the Dominions will act just as they acted in 1914. I have no doubts that their full strength will be thrown into the next great struggle, with results as decisive as in the past. But so long as human society is divided up into sovereign states, the first and most solemn duty of governments is to prevent the outbreak of war, a task which clearly involves an active, close and continuous study of world affairs. In countries like Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden questions of foreign policy are treated as matters which call for supreme attention. The proportion of time devoted by governments and legislatures to discussing them shows that this is the case. They are fully equipped with the diplomatic machinery without which no government can be fully informed on the subject; and their taxpayers bear the cost.

At the Imperial Conference of 1911 Mr. Asquith affirmed in unequivocal terms that the British government could not share the responsibility for foreign affairs with Dominion governments. During and since the war that position was abandoned. After the war full and detailed information on foreign affairs has been transmitted by cable and mail from the Foreign Office to Dominion governments. In recent years responsible ministers in three Dominions have told me that these despatches were not circulated by the minister in charge of external affairs to his colleagues except in moments of crisis. When a crisis in foreign affairs compels these Dominion cabinets to consider their position, there is only one minister who brings to the subject a

previous knowledge of foreign affairs other than that which an ordinary reader of the press would acquire. And this, I was told, was due to the fact that the electorates, to which they are answerable, take little interest in foreign affairs, except at a moment of crisis which threatens the world with war, or in some aspect of external affairs which directly affects their own livelihood.

When I look round the world, the only commonwealths I see which could take the initiative in relieving mankind from its present impasse in the century before us are self-governing Dominions. Yet I do not feel that, as things are, they will bring themselves to take it. I use the words 'as things are' because I can conceive them taking it as the result of some great catastrophe not so great as to rob them of all power of action, that is to say to destroy them as commonwealths. I think that this would have happened if the war had ended with a so-called peace which left the naval and military powers of the central empires in being, such a peace as in 1917 Lansdowne wished to see made. I think it may happen if the British commonwealths should experience and also survive another cataclysm as bad or worse than the Great War. But I write in the hope and presumption that such a catastrophe may be averted until the difficult step can be taken which alone, as I think, can prevent its certain recurrence sooner or later. I am, therefore, driven to ask what it is that deters these commonwealths from taking a step which they only can take, and when taken by them will, I believe, enable the world to pass to a higher level of civilisation.

I am thus led to state a conclusion from which I have long shrunk. In spite of all that is said and written and of all appearances, the Dominions have not as yet acquired the character of national commonwealths, and cannot acquire it until they have

accepted in unequivocal terms the responsibility for peace or war. They cannot do this, nor feel they have done it, until they have notified to the world at large that they are not involved in war till their own governments have officially declared that they are so involved.

The cabinet, parliament and electorate of a Dominion which had once come to this point would begin to take an interest in world affairs to which they cannot be brought in times of peace, so long as the present conditions exist. They would cease to be screened from the hard facts by direct contact with which men learn what those facts are. They would have to provide for themselves the diplomatic machinery without which no government can follow the course of foreign affairs. They would lose the habit of mind induced by a satellite position—the habit of mind which prevents them from seeing the key position which they hold at this juncture of human history.

This explains why I think that the first international commonwealth to come into being will be formed by the English-speaking communities most remote from each other. Of all these communities Canada will find it most difficult to achieve the status of a national commonwealth in the full sense of that word. Even if Canada reached the point of telling the world that the issues of peace and war were for her settled at Ottawa, and nowhere else, both she and the world would know that they still were, as a matter of fact, settled at Washington. The momentous task of founding the first international commonwealth must, I think, be achieved by peoples who have really known how it feels to depend on their own resources. The Dominions south of the line can, if they will, experience that feeling, and the task of initiating the first international commonwealth will, I believe, rest with them. If and when its stability

was proved and also its capacity to include other democracies, those even of northern Europe, Canada would, I think, follow suit, and by doing so pave the way for its ultimate fusion with the great American Commonwealth. And whenever the people of North America add their strength to an international commonwealth the epoch of world wars in which we are now living will be finally closed.

## CHAPTER XII

### CONSTRUCTIVE RELIGION

I HAVE thus been led to conclude that in the world, as it now is, the first step from the national to the international commonwealth could only be taken by some of the self-governing nations under the British Crown. Critics may say that the picture I have drawn serves only to demonstrate the chimerical nature of my views. The reader, I feel, will allow that I have not sought to minimise the difficulties which stand in the way of the first step from the national to the international commonwealth. But the difficulties are not physical, as they were in the time of Burke. They are now spiritual difficulties—difficulties such as exist in the minds of men. They belong to that sphere in which it is true that “faith can remove mountains”, and, because I believe that these words convey a vital truth in rhetorical form, I have tried to explain what I mean by the word ‘faith’: “In the long run what any society is to become will depend on what it believes, or disbelieves, about the eternal things”.<sup>1</sup>

Such beliefs, I have urged, cannot be based on revelations attested or signed by miracles. “Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given.”<sup>2</sup> If revelations could be so signed and attested there would then be no room for doubt and, therefore, no room for faith in the true sense of that word. I have not denied revelation as a fact. On the contrary, I can only describe the instinct which tells us that right differs from wrong, as a revelation by God to man. I have merely said that its truth cannot be attested by miracles, that it must be accepted as a matter of

faith. I think that by giving us conscience and reason he led us on to discover his existence for ourselves, to know and adore him. I believe that Moses and the prophets divined the nature of God by flashes of insight, by intuitions deeper than those given to ordinary minds. Whence those visions of truth came, whether from within or without their minds, is not so important as the question whether their vision was truer than anything which the minds of men had before conceived. But the truth they spoke cannot be attested by thunders or earthquakes shaking the mountains on which they stood. I can only recognise their truths in so far as my own conscience and mind tell me that what they said was true. Here, in my judgment, were men whose thoughts went deeper and truer than those of men who had gone before them. I must listen with great attention to all they said, and do my best to grasp their meaning. This does not imply that all they said must be true. I must use my own judgment to winnow the grains of truth they produced from the husks of tradition in which it was grown.

The Hebrew prophets conceived the reality behind the visible and tangible universe as something of the nature of our own personalities raised to infinity. They thought of God as having created the world as we know it, with man in it; and here, I think, they were right. But in thinking that God had finished and ended the work of creation I think they were wrong. They thought of God as the spirit of righteousness whose laws men ought to obey. The spectacle of the powerful monarchs who ruled in the world about them coloured and also confined their conception of God. They thought of his laws as decrees of a monarch, and of man's disobedience as sin. The supreme importance of avoiding sin was uppermost in their minds. When they wrote in a code what they felt were the ten supreme commandments of God

seven of the ten began with the words "Thou shalt not"—were couched in the negative vein.

While our Lord accepted much of their view his teaching went far beyond it. In his mind the Kingdom of God was not an order in which men, as the subjects of God, were mainly concerned with keeping his laws, with avoiding their breach. In his mind the work of creation had never ceased. It would always go on. Men were called to join as partners with God in making new things. The material world was the sphere in which men were called to cooperate with God in work of spiritual creation. The Kingdom of God on this earth was a system of society to be ordered by men themselves in accordance with the mind of God. In so far as men learned to see what the mind of God was, and based their relations on what they saw, the system they brought into being would shape those who lived under it in the likeness of God. His Kingdom *was* of this world, but also of the next. I think that our Lord saw this world as a field of preparation for worlds beyond, which men neglect at their peril. I do not believe that he taught that men can fulfil their duty to God in this world merely by avoiding sin, by helping others to avoid it, nor by any mere process of escape from the penalties of sin. Their fundamental task on this earth was the ordering of men's relations one with another in accordance with the mind of God—that is to say, on the basis of the infinite duty which each owes to God and his brethren the children of God.

In the first part of this book I tried to trace the influence which led Christians to think of the system conceived by the founder as something apart from human society as a whole. They missed his conception of this world as the workshop in which worlds beyond it are to be shaped. The church developed as something apart from the world, through which Christians escaped from the world,

to something better beyond it. This led to a false and disastrous antithesis between church and state. The church is regarded, by Catholics at any rate, as something higher than the state and by its nature opposed to the state. How potent this view still is in the Catholic world can be seen from a book published since the first volume of *Civitas Dei* appeared, under the title of *Religion and the Modern State*:

... The whole Christian tradition, and the prophetic tradition which lies behind it, are a standing protest against the injustice and falsehood of that which is commonly called civilization. The world which is the natural enemy of the Church is not a moral abstraction, it is an historical reality which finds its embodiment in the empires and world cities of history—in Babylon and Tyre and Rome. Wherever the city of man sets itself up as an end in itself and becomes the centre of a self-contained and self-regarding order, it becomes the natural enemy of the city of God.<sup>3</sup>

The reactions produced by such teaching can now be gauged by the millions who bow their knees in the temples erected by Marx and Hitler. In our hearts there is that which tells us that life and the world about us are good, with a goodness to be brought into being by ourselves. The communist stresses the material aspect of goodness, till he comes to deny the spiritual basis of life, and that life can persist beyond time and space. In a memorable broadcast Professor Toynbee utters a warning which Christians were wise to consider:

The post-war Paganism also gives its converts directions for their conduct in practical life; and these directions are of the kind which human nature craves for; they are simple, and clear, and concrete, and confident. A believing Fascist or Communist can probably get more definite instructions than a believing Christian about how he is to behave here and now: whom to love, whom (in his case) to hate, what to fight for, what to worship.<sup>4</sup>

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be

thy name" is a prayer which assumes that spirit not matter is the essence of life. Then, first and foremost, the worshipper is directed to rivet his mind on the purpose of God, which is creative. "Thy kingdom come." The petition which follows is a specific warning against the idea that the Kingdom of God will be brought into being solely by the action of God himself. "Thy will be done, *In earth as it is in heaven.*" This can only mean, I submit, that the Kingdom of God will come, but only as we ourselves see and accomplish his will upon earth. We, the children of God and brethren, are called of our own free will to join with our Father in the work of creation, a work which can only go on in this world in so far as we join in it. How often the prayer "Thy will be done", shorn of the words which follow it, is narrowed on tombstones to express resignation, which at best is a negative virtue!

The prayer then proceeds to deal with things of importance, but important only in the second degree. "Give us this day our daily bread." God knows that men need the physical strength to accomplish his will and create his Kingdom on earth. They are right to secure and enjoy the material things which give them this strength, so long as they do not forget the end in the means. Quite late in the prayer comes the petition which accepts and affirms the point of view of the Old Testament. "And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil." The avoidance of sin, forgiveness of sin, redemption from sin are essential. All this had been said before by the Hebrew prophets, and our Lord endorsed it. His own special contribution was the emphasis he laid on constructive aspects of conduct. To see and to do the will of God in this world (for we cannot do it until we see it) and so to create his Kingdom on earth is the first and foremost duty of

man. He framed that prayer and bade his followers to repeat it, in order to remind them day by day that the service of God involves infinitely more than mechanical obedience to a code of laws. My criticism is that the churches have largely reversed the emphasis expressed by their founder in the order in which he framed these petitions. The second part of the Lord's Prayer has been treated as primary; part of the first has been almost forgotten, or misdirected and misunderstood.

In Protestant churches it is now usual to replace the ten commandments from the Old Testament by the two commandments which Christ is said to have uttered, and I have no doubt that he uttered:

The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.<sup>5</sup>

Whether our Lord was the first to say this, or whether he was merely quoting words which Jewish Rabbis had used before him, is a question of no importance to those who believe that the final source of authority is in the conscience of men themselves. These words, if they mean anything, mean this, that every man owes an infinite duty to God and his children, his fellow-men.

All followers of Christ will agree that he said that, and meant that. Whether as a matter of fact he said it, is an interesting question of history, but one not so important as the question whether the saying is true. We are here faced by an aphorism which all who believe in conscience will feel to be true. All those who seek to determine their conduct by the view that our own personalities are the key to reality will accept this aphorism as truth. Christians, at any rate, will accept it as such. But I cannot read the records

we have of our Lord's teaching without feeling that he clearly realised the dangerous tendency of human nature to leave such truths in the air. It was for this reason, I think, that he emphasised so strongly the importance of realising the Kingdom of God, of realising that Kingdom on earth. He was, I submit, calling on men to apply this principle to the lives they led. But a principle cannot be fully applied except by a system which men must create for themselves. When Jesus called upon men to create the Kingdom of God he was, I submit, calling upon them to create such a system. It was left for men to think and work out for themselves what that system would be.

It is for this reason that I have tried in these pages to think out for myself what a working system of human society would be, if framed to realise the principle of the infinite duty of each to all and also what practical steps we can take to create such a system. I am driven by reason and experience to believe that a system like this must, in the long run, mean the organisation of all human society in one commonwealth. I also see that a principle like this can only be realised little by little. It must first be realised for communities small as cities, before it can be realised for communities large as nations. It must be realised by nations before it can be realised for international commonwealths. Some international commonwealth or commonwealths must be realised before ever the final goal of the world commonwealth is in sight.

The great difficulty lies in moving from one stage to the next. It consists no longer in physical obstacles but only in human minds. The difficulty of so changing the minds of men, even in commonwealths most advanced, is hard to exaggerate. It is mountainous in size and as such can only be removed by faith. Because I feel that these mountains can only be

moved by faith, I look with hope to repositories of faith, to churches which are based upon faith in the real sense of that word.

To leave the language of metaphor, I feel that when once the Protestant churches have learned to regard the creation of a world commonwealth as an all-important aspect of their work in realising the Kingdom of God, an international commonwealth in the English-speaking world would come into being in a few generations. A bridge would be thrown over the gulf in men's minds which now bars our progress to a higher civilisation. One bridge would suffice, but others would also, perhaps, be built on its model—the more the better. The task of merging two or more international commonwealths will not, I think, be so difficult as the task of creating the first international commonwealth. My hopes lie with the churches which are not bound by the chain of their past. Yet, strangely enough, the train of thought which runs through this book was first set in motion by reading long years ago the unfinished words found in the papers of a Catholic poet after his death:

#### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

##### *"In No Strange Land"*

O world invisible, we view thee,  
O world intangible, we touch thee,  
O world unknowable, we know thee,  
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
The eagle plunge to find the air—  
That we ask of the stars in motion  
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—  
 Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
*'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangéd faces,  
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.*

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
 Cry,—and upon thy so sore loss  
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
 Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
 Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;  
 And lo, Christ walking on the water,  
 Not of Genesareth, but Thames!<sup>6</sup>

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 250. The Home University Library.
- <sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 12.
- <sup>3</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, pp. 104-5.
- <sup>4</sup> January 19, 1937.
- <sup>5</sup> Mark xii. 29-31.
- <sup>6</sup> Francis Thompson, *Selected Poems*, p. 130. Methuen & Co., 1911.

THE END

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